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SKILLED HORSEMANSHIP

BY THE SAME AUTHOR :

Bridle Wise

The Fellowship of the Horse

Stable Wise

An Eye for a Horse



A SKILLED PAIR

SKILLED HORSEMANSHIP

by

LIEUT.-COL. SIDNEY G. GOLDSCHMIDT

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There is among horse-lovers a freemasonry which makes it impossible for one enthusiast to be bored in the company of another; a great leveller the horse, and amongst his devotees social barriers are as naught and conversation can never flag.

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The Drawings on page 44 are by **FELIX WEISS**

SKILLED HORSEMANSHIP

There are two aspects of skilled horsemanship. There is in the first place the satisfaction of economy in a successful stable, and in the second place, the confidence and self-respect that accompany skill, even if mere vanity were not enough to urge the ambitious to strive for greater proficiency.

There is no game or sport for which there is a greater need for expert coaching than horsemanship, and no game or sport where bad habits are so quickly acquired and so difficult to eradicate. Yet for some reason this expert coaching is often dispensed with.

Although horsemanship cannot be learned from a book, there can be no high attainment without a study of the theory of the subject. When it is pointed out that many fine horsemen have never read a book on the subject, it must be borne in mind that they would have attained their skill much earlier in life if they had.

A cavalry officer has the chance of reaching a high state of efficiency by attending the Weedon equitation course¹ with perhaps the added polish of a period of attachment to Saumur or some other continental cavalry school. For the civilian, however, there is no equivalent for Weedon and even if there were it is doubtful if the average man could either spare the time or go to the expense of such a course. For two years the Weedon undergraduate, *specially selected for his aptitude*, studies horsemanship, the theory in the lecture room aided by films, and the practical part in the riding school and hunting field. The civilian has no way of acquiring skilled horsemanship other than by assiduous practice—and in the absence of supervision and lectures, this must be combined with a study of the literature of the subject.

In *Bridle Wise* and *Stable Wise* I try to help the enthusiast through two essential preliminaries: to instruct him in riding and horse-mastership so that he can teach his horses to obey their rider's wishes, recognise a well-balanced horse and know what to expect from one that is properly cared for in the stable.

These attainments are, however, only beginnings and a wide realm of horse lore lies beyond.

The following pages provide a short cut to the higher flights of horsemanship, so that half a lifetime need not be spent before one

¹See Appendix.

'arrives', the main theme being to explain the theory that enables the rider to become a horseman. This embraces the mental attitude of a man in his dealings with the horse and the horse's reactions. It is impossible to consider either of them intelligently unless each is studied in conjunction with the other. We have, in short, to learn the means of communication that have been devised and amended in the course of centuries—a most fascinating side of horsemanship which when mastered enables a rider to make some sort of a show on any horse, no matter how raw and untutored it may be, and which in turn will go comfortably and happily under him.

Who has not found himself in the company of older and vastly more experienced horsemen and been impressed by the familiarity with which they approach and handle a strange horse, and the confidence with which the horse receives their advances? We cannot fail to envy the ease with which they accommodate themselves to an animal which they bestride for the first time and the precision with which the horse responds to their handling. When these past-masters dismount they will comment on make, shape, mouth and the 'ride' so clearly and surely that there is no gainsaying their criticism, and it is hard to believe that they and the horse were strangers five minutes before. The uninitiated, their eyes open for the first time, will feel that silence is their only refuge, and that there is so much to be learned beyond the practical side of horsemanship that they will almost despair.

They must surely realise their shortcomings and welcome a helping hand to lift them out of the silence and darkness which inexperience and the lack of self-confidence force upon them, one that opens the door to the wider aspect of horsemanship. No matter how slender may be our horsey experience, are we not all connoisseurs or at all events would-be connoisseurs? As that great student of human nature, John Jorrocks, said, it is better to cast doubts on a man's morality than to impugn his horsemanship.

The men and women who look upon learning as infinite, and as the only way to make the most of their talents, who realise that each item of knowledge gained is only a stepping-stone to further attainment, these are the real connoisseurs whose enjoyment of their talents and hobbies steadily increases with time. There is no standing still; not to progress in knowledge spells staleness and retrogression.

Good riding must carry with it an aptitude for applying the aids so as to restrain and guide a horse and overcome his resistance. Here force is out of the question on account of the horse's strength and weight. It is, however, necessary in addition for every rider, whether groom, rider, hunting man or polo player, if he wishes to become a horseman, to know not only how to make himself understood, but also

to understand what his horse wishes to convey to him. There is, in fact, a language that has to be learned by both mount and man, and until this language is learned there can be no skilled horsemanship. Mutual understanding (call it sympathy if you will) is the basis, and any correctly instructed rider will be able to get on better terms with his horse than if he is self-taught.

The horse is a dumb animal and his powers of expression are limited, so that (except to the keenest observer) his only apparent means of reply are *compliance* or *resistance*. But once confidence has been established, if only our means of communication are rational, in other words, if our language is clear, there are only three things which militate against obedience to our commands: physical disability to carry out the task demanded, fatigue and anger; and it may well be that the last two are the outcome of the first. Often, however, fatigue supervenes as the result of the rider's not knowing the signs of its approach, another grave form of misunderstanding; and anger, in ninety-nine instances out of a hundred, is caused by a man acting on the wrong assumption that he has made his meaning clear to the horse when he has not.

If a man has had the opportunity of beginning his horsey career quite young there is every hope that he will be able to estimate the reactions of a horse under most circumstances. There is also a good chance that sensitiveness, the power of perception through the nerves of the whole body, will become highly developed. But he must not allow himself to be deluded; to attain a complete understanding, expert tuition, study, and unremitting practice are necessary, and in addition, the immense amount of thought that all horsemen have to give to the subject.

A friend of mine, a great polo enthusiast, was once asked by the local padre how it was that he had not been to church lately. He replied that he only went in the polo season, when he found the atmosphere just right for thinking out his biting problems.

This is a book not only for riders but for all who have dealings with horses, especially for the man who has learnt to make his horse bridle-wise and himself stable-wise, but who looks upon these two arts as preliminaries. Its perusal must increase the understanding that should exist for true sympathy between man, the most loquacious of all God's creatures, and the horse, one of the least articulate.

PART I

HORSE-MASTERSHIP

CHAPTER I

STABLE MANAGEMENT

Once upon a time
A little child with earnest face
Essayed to teach
Its aged grandmamma
How perfectly it could extract
The luscious nutriment
Contained within an oval shell
By simple vacuum.
'Tis ever thus.

The subject matter of this chapter will awaken one of two sentiments. The beginner will miss the fundamental details of the routine of stable management; the horseman of experience will find therein much that he already knows. It did not at first seem easy to select matter appropriate to the title of this book till the idea occurred to me that the gap between the new generation of horsemen and the old school was considerable. To the latter, the lines at the head of this chapter may suggest themselves, but there is nevertheless much food for thought. For essentials and details of stable management he will have to turn to one of the books devoted specially to this important subject.¹

There is great room for improvement in our attitude to the horse, and this is clearly shown in our stable management. There is too much domination, too little kinship and too little understanding of a horse's individuality. It should be appreciated that although a horse is stronger and heavier than a man there is a way of mastering him without that constant recourse to harshness which seems to be part of the English stableman's make-up.

Is it too fantastic a dream that we could, in common with the Arab horseman and without impairing a horse's physical powers, produce a generation of working horses as anxious to please as a dog? And yet, the dog is but a civilised and domesticated wolf, a creature originally more untameable, savage and inimical to man than ever a wild horse could have been.

Anyway, we can come very much nearer than we do at present to

¹ See also *Stable Wise* by the same author.

sympathetic stable management and horse-mastership generally; better mannered horses would be the result, greater efficiency and a longer working life.

The best stable management in the world is seen in the Circus, and a study of the methods of these establishments will repay the student. Here he will see beautifully trained animals, sleek, well-groomed, doing their work more cheerfully than any others I know of. They are also the most approachable in the stable.

As the Circus grooms, as well as the trainers of the horses, are nearly always foreigners, it is interesting to study the methods of other countries.

It was another object lesson to watch the native grooms in charge of the Jeypore and Jodhpur ponies. After riding them to the ground in snaffles they were so deft and gentle in their handling that they could substitute these for their playing bridles, fasten the curb chains and martingales without even distracting the ponies' attention from their surroundings.

OWNER AND GROOM

There can be no pleasure in keeping a stable without complete understanding between owner and groom, and this understanding cannot exist unless there is a full comprehension of all the many points that make for efficient stable management. On the same principle it is a duty only to hire from a livery stable or riding school that is efficiently and humanely managed. It will be seen, therefore, how important is this expert knowledge. It is clear that if an owner does not know enough to see almost at a glance that a horse is well-fed (without being over-fresh), well-groomed, well-shod, well-trimmed and well-turned out generally—this also applies to saddlery—he will be appearing in public, at covert-side, on the polo ground, at a pony rally or in the show ring with his incompetence as a horse-master well advertised. In addition, his horse will be doing its work under adverse and uncomfortable conditions if it is not actually suffering hardship incidental to working in an unfit state. There is nothing more distressing for the horseman than riding an unclean horse sweating unduly and becoming exhausted when others are enjoying a hunt.

The Groom. Here it is necessary to begin with a comment on a common error, which is to vary the type of groom according to the size of the stud. The owner with one horse is apt to be content with a man of less experience than would be engaged to look after a stud of three, which we can put down as the maximum for that somewhat pathetic figure—the single-handed groom.

The position of a groom in an establishment, whether large or small, is peculiar in that it differs from the relationship between master and man in any other walk in life.

In the first place, a groom cannot have set hours, whether in the polo or hunting season. He seldom knows when his work for the day will be over. This calls for sympathetic consideration from the employer on those occasions when work is slack. I remember being asked by a friend, a beginner at horse-keeping, whether I thought it was right that his man should cease work on occasion at five o'clock. Enquiry elicited the fact that on hunting days his work started at six and he was often still at work at ten, in fact, it was by no means unusual for him to put in seventy to eighty hours work a week. Is there any other employment where such hours are tolerated without extra pay for overtime or for work on Saturday afternoon and Sunday? If there were Trades' Union rules to safeguard the interests of stablemen and to govern their conditions of work, I doubt whether anyone would consider it worth while to keep horses.

The only thing that makes a groom's life tolerable is an intense love of the horse and all that pertains to the life of a stableman. He must also be able to count on the consideration and friendly interest in his work and affairs from his employer. His life is more exacting than that of a hospital nurse, because in his case there is no one with whom to divide the duties, no set hour to go off duty and to turn over to a relief.

An owner, whether experienced or not, must realise how much he has to depend on his groom. In most instances strapping, feeding and exercise are entirely in his hands, and when these three important points are considered we must conclude that the efficiency, knowledge and conscientiousness of the groom spell either success or failure.

One of the most important points is the man's domicile. His hours are so elastic that it can never be said that his work is done. In a recent authoritative article on stable management the following routine is laid down for a polo pony.

SUMMER TIME-TABLE

5.15 a.m. Men to be down in stables. Clean out bedding, water, pick out feet, sponge nostrils and dock. Remove night clothing. Groom over with body brush. Clean head-collars. Put on day clothing.

6 a.m. Feed—2 lb. crushed oats with chaff.

6.45 a.m. Saddle up for exercise. Unless there is any reason to the contrary this should be carried out in snaffles. In the mean-

time, stables should be left to air thoroughly—also air night rugs. If there is a man left in, he should sweep out the stable floors and hay up with 2 lb. of hay for ponies' return, when they will be thoroughly groomed and bedding put down. On return from exercise, ponies should be watered.

10.30 a.m. Feed—3 lb. oats, 1 lb. chaff.

2 p.m. Feed—2 lb. oats, 1 lb. chaff.

5 p.m. Feed—2 lb. oats, 1 lb. chaff.

The above two feeds should be normal when not playing fast polo, but on polo days the 2 p.m. feed must be eliminated. Divide the amount allotted between other feeds; the 5 p.m. feed may have to be later, depending on the time of playing. Ponies should drink their fill on return, night rugs should be put on and attention paid to any animal breaking out in a sweat, when it should be rubbed down again.

8 p.m. 3 lb. oats, 1 lb. chaff.

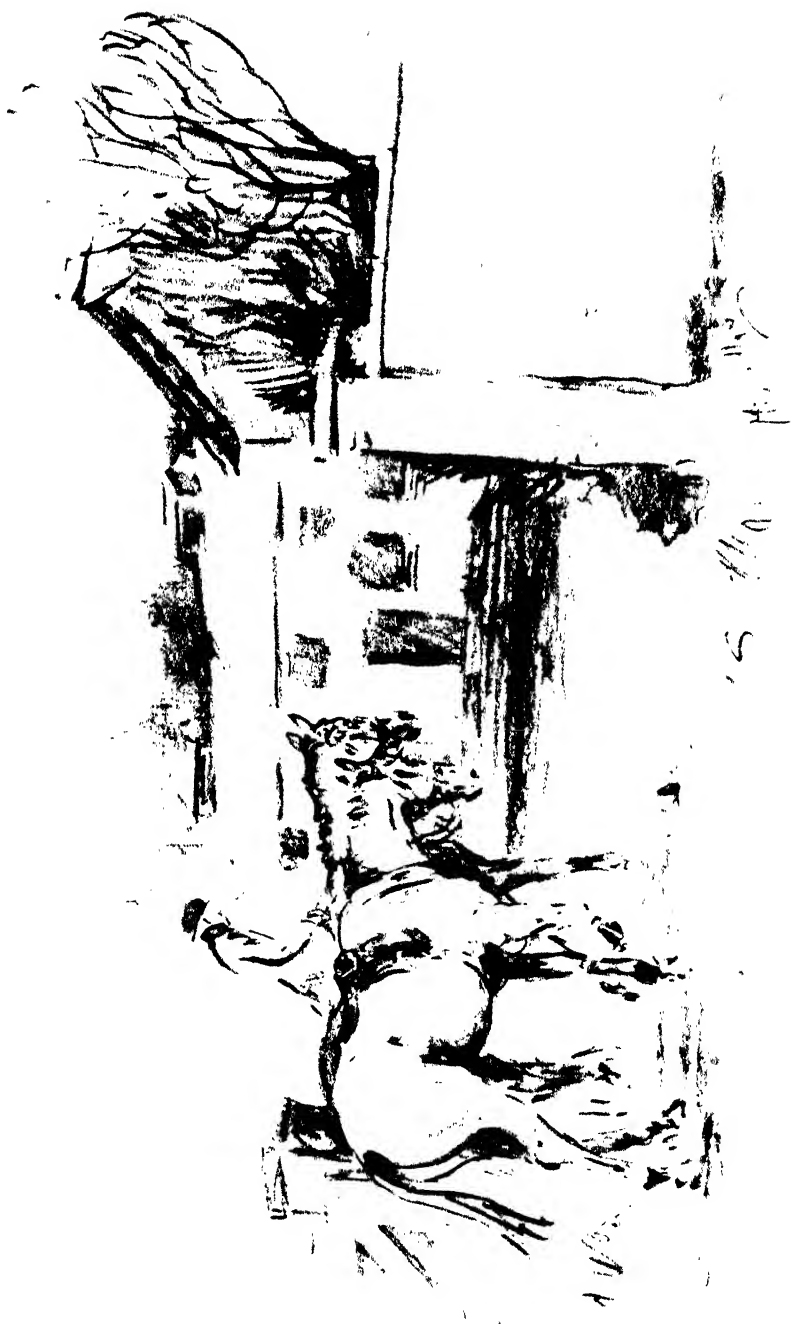
On polo days one of the afternoon feeds can be varied as follows: $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of boiled peas, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. boiled linseed, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. steamed bran, 3 lb. steamed oats. This must be prepared beforehand and left covered over until required.

8.30 p.m. Hay up with 5 lb. hay.

For a hunter on a non-hunting day the routine is not dissimilar, but circumstances vary so much on hunting days that it is difficult to lay down a rigid time-table. The factors that make for variation are—distance from the meet, whether or not the owner has a motor horse-box, whether he has one horse out or, in addition, a second horse, whether a groom has to motor out to meet his master or whether the horse is to be hacked home. Another important point is whether there is a second man left at home to carry on the stable work while his mate is out. All these varying conditions call for corresponding and often ingenious modifications.

The difficulty is by no means confined to a hunting day, for even from exercise the groom may return to the stable soaked himself and with two wet horses or at the best with the rugs wet through.

Under any circumstance a horse owner would be lucky if he could find a single-handed groom who would adhere to such long hours; and if his cottage or lodging were any distance, however small, from the stable, it would be straining human nature too far to expect it in these days of so many counter-attractions. I have never had to deal with the problem of a non-resident groom and on reflection I think a cottage at the stable is almost a *sine qua non*. This time-table is, more-



over, a 'fair weather' one and it might well happen that with a sick or injured horse, the groom will get little sleep (if indeed any) at night and then he has to snatch what rest he can during the day. The motor horse-box and trailer have simplified matters, and rustless steel bits and stirrup irons together with the electrically driven clipping machine help still further. It is safe to say that with these three adjuncts two horses can do the work of three in a normal season and in an abnormally open one two horses can do their work *without losing condition throughout the season*. Nevertheless, a conscientious hunting groom's problems are greatly complicated by even a quarter of a mile between his cottage and his work.

In this connection also we can consider what is the most economical and carefree stable. The single-handed groom on a hunting day has a hard time of it and this is bound to be reflected on the treatment his horses get. He will have to be at the meet at 11 o'clock (unless, of course, the owner hacks on or takes on his horse by himself in the trailer or horse-box). If he has to ride the second horse and stay out to bring both home it will mean that he has to stay out till 3.30 or 4 o'clock, hack home and then be faced with the multifarious duties attached to two hungry, tired and muddy horses and two dirty saddles and bridles, to say nothing of his own fatigue and hunger. In addition to all this, the work in the stable since he left it, probably at about 9 o'clock, has been at a standstill, there is no gruel ready for his horses, unless this can be prepared either in the owner's kitchen or his own, and his tea, unless he lives on the premises, will be far away.

The above quoted instances are not exceptional but there are circumstances that make for a modification. For instance, the groom may be able to ride the first horse home and thus have him clean and comfortable by the time the second horse gets back. Anyway, it is obvious that his task can be lightened in many ways by a considerate employer who appreciates the difficulties. Actually for a stable of any size, large or small, it will be necessary for the owner constantly to think out ways and means of lightening his men's work.

The easiest stable to run is one of five or six horses with two grooms. The duties can be so arranged that this can just be managed even in a full hunting season with a little ingenuity, especially with one owner. If two hunting men club together for such a stable of six horses, three men and a motor-box would be necessary if each owner had two horses out each hunting day.

The great point to avoid is that the routine stable work is at a standstill for most of the day, and in the second place that there is no one to attend to the immediate needs of tired horses. Some owners are

willing to lend a hand in the stable, but if they themselves arrive home wet, tired and hungry, this help is apt to be perfunctory.

If all these points are not appreciated the condition of the horses will suffer and the men will be discontented.

The most expensive stable is the one where horses are out of action through lameness, disease or want of condition. The wages and forage bills continue and the hunt subscription is not abated while the owner's pleasure is in abeyance.

LIVERY STABLES

If an owner cannot provide living accommodation for his groom or grooms on the premises, he will be better advised to keep his horse at livery. There are plenty of such stables in most hunting countries, far better run now than they used to be, and although a man misses much of the pleasure of a stable by not having his horse at home, he is more likely to have a full season on a fit, sound horse than he would with an imperfectly run home stable.

It is, as said before, the duty of an owner who avails himself of the convenience of stabling his horse at livery, not only to select one that is humanely and efficiently run but by regular visits to see that the quality of the forage is kept up and that grooming and exercising are regular and energetic, and *the horses must be kept in loose boxes and not in stalls*. In fact, the standard should be as high as in a private stable, at all events with the forage, grooming and saddlery. The tidiness and cleanliness of the yard, boxes and saddle-room will often leave something to be desired, and beautifully turned-out horses may come from mean and humble stables and regrettably the reverse is often the case, 'spit and polish' not always ensuring well conditioned horses. The keepers of the modern livery hunting stables are usually men of far greater experience than one could hope for in a single-handed groom and competition is a great incentive to efficiency. Good stable management spells health, pleasure and safety and as the terms of payment are, or should be, by the week, an owner should not hesitate to make a change should he have reason to believe that his horse and saddlery are not being well treated.

The points mentioned above will necessitate an adequate staff, but the number of horses to one groom will depend on so many varying circumstances that it cannot be stated in figures. The position of the livery stable with reference to the meets and to a railway station, whether the owners have motor horse-boxes, whether most owners ride a second horse or not, all such questions affect the number of grooms required.

DEMEANOUR

The proprietor of one of the best-run livery stables I know is so insistent on the quiet demeanour of his grooms that he will only engage men over forty-five and even prefers them round about sixty. He finds these older men have a very wide experience and are definitely helpful in emergency, are not so dependent on orders, displaying more initiative. They are, further, more content to work the long hours the hunting season demands, having outlived the temptations of courting, the cinema, dancing, etc. For his private stable an owner might fight shy of engaging a man past middle age on the grounds that he would not wish to saddle himself with the responsibility of his future when he had got past his work. No such consideration need bother the livery-stable keeper who engages his men for the season only. Another well-run stable I know finds it advantageous for the above reason to employ only girls. A stable life is becoming increasingly attractive to young women. But in this instance the owner devotes the whole of his time to the affairs of the stable, and is always at hand to instruct and supervise.

It is amazing how quickly these experienced old men and these girls get on good terms with even highly strung thoroughbreds, and it should be appreciated how much a horse's manners are affected by his treatment in the stable.

Everyone who approaches a horse in the stable—whether owner, visitor or groom—must train themselves, in voice, demeanour and gesture, to establish confidence. One has only to compare the reaction of a horse to the timid approach of a man unused to horses with the welcome given to the assured approach of the experienced groom, to realise this essential point. One can easily prove how impervious a horse is to facial expression and how susceptible to voice and gesture. The most forbidding grimace has no effect while the sudden raising of the hand will make him shrink away apprehensively. So it will be seen that a man's bearing in the proximity of a horse is an all-important factor in gaining or losing his confidence and the tone of voice must come, through association of ideas, to mean something to him. The instruction, 'Always speak to a horse before approaching him' is too vague. One must learn how to speak and what tone to use.

GROOMING

Whether the horse is at livery or at home the owner should be able to judge whether grooming is regularly and efficiently done. Daily grooming is essential to health and no horse can do his work if this is neglected. A horse is always throwing off impurities through

the pores and a coating of dried sweat forms over the skin at the roots of the hair. This must be removed by brushing or the pores become clogged and free perspiration impeded. This scarf skin, besides being dirt causes an undue strain on heart, lungs and kidneys, which would have to do more than their normal share in removing waste products from the tissues and blood.

Grooming is an expert job entailing considerable exertion always and unnecessary exertion unless the knack is learnt.

A horse can be made restless and even resentful if this grooming is roughly done and without due regard to the horse's sensibility. A thin skinned horse can be driven almost mad by being roughly groomed. For such horses nothing but a soft body brush should be used once the mud has been removed with a straw wisp. An owner should satisfy himself that the grooming in his stable is carried out in an atmosphere of peace. It is doubtful whether this can happen if his groom is a young man in a hurry to finish and get away from the stable.¹

FEEDING

There is little to say here even to the skilled horseman, as feeding is an art so difficult to learn that it may be said to be a gift beyond the powers of the ordinary horse owner. A man must, however, study one of the books on stable management so that he knows at least the rudiments.¹ Then I am afraid he must leave matters to his groom, who *may* be a good feeder, but there is nothing but keen observation and a wide experience that will make him so.

There is, however, this broad principle to lay down: a man cannot be called a good feeder if he does not keep a hunter or a polo pony fit and in fairly *big* condition throughout a season.

The preparation of a hunter or a polo pony for the season is something quite different from the training of a racehorse.

The date of a race for which a horse is being prepared is for the trainer a very limiting and hampering condition. A man, who has gone grey-haired in the profession, once told me that with 75 per cent. of his horses the date of the race is always about a week wrong, that either his horses have begun to go off or that they have not quite reached their best. Then, in addition, as he has the owner to satisfy, he must often have to stretch a point rather than confess that he has not quite hit it off, and that his candidate is not at its best.

It is not necessary to go further in speaking of the racehorse, and it has only been necessary to go this length in order to point out that a horse must start the hunting or polo season big if he is not to fade away before the end.

¹ See *Stable Wise*.

SHOEING

The forging and fitting of a shoe is an *art*. The chief thing that an owner has to supervise here is that the smith really fits the shoe to the foot and that he does not rasp or pare the foot to fit the shoe. The real difficulty is firstly to prepare the foot and then to select the type, shape, weight and thickness of shoe to fit a horse's action and conformation. This is the *science* of shoeing.

The evil effects of a badly fitting shoe are many but never so serious as the result of the wrong type of shoe. The real expert smith will study the way a horse stands and see him jogged out before he decides on the type of shoe to make. The slope of the pastern has to be considered, the incidence of the weight on the fore and hind feet and whether the toes are turned out or in, the straightness of the horse's movements at the trot and whether the heel or the toe comes to the ground first.

Often it is necessary to help the smith in these decisions and if the owner does not feel that he or his groom is competent to give this help he may have to call in a veterinary surgeon.

Badly *designed* shoes are very fruitful causes of lameness. A comparatively light blow with the opposite foot will start a splint. There is the lameness caused by hitting a fetlock joint (brushing) or sprains may happen through the incorrect ground surface of the shoe putting an undue strain on one of the many ligaments and tendons.

The lameness from badly *fitting* and badly *nailed* shoes is in the foot itself. In all cases of obscure lameness the temperature of the two feet should be compared. If there is no reason to suspect foot lameness the inside of the foot opposite to the side on which the horse is lame should be painted with whitening and the horse worked quietly for a few minutes in soft and hard going to see if he is hitting himself somewhere. It is not enough to jog him out in hand as there should be weight on his back. Of course if the seat of lameness is obvious, owing to heat or swelling, the test mentioned above will not be necessary and should not be made, as complete rest is important.

Before leaving the subject I should like to tender a piece of important advice. Hunters should always be shod behind in overreach shoes. Overreach is an accident always to be reckoned with, especially in soft going, and there is such a simple way of reducing the risk of it. It will be found that a smith will require a certain amount of coercion before he will make this somewhat troublesome kind of shoe.

CHAPTER II

FRESHNESS AND FAILURE

Freshness may be defined as 'the exuberance caused by overfeeding', but for this definition to be of any practical value it must be amplified and qualified. There would be nothing undesirable in this exuberance if the horse always used it to obey his rider's indications with greater vigour. In fact, if our stable management is so skilful that we can arrive at this condition without going beyond it, this would be described as perfect fitness.

Freshness is one or more degrees beyond this. Unfortunately, however well-schooled and experienced a horse or pony may be, at the back of his mind is the desire to avoid domination, so that he will get rid of the superabundant energy engendered by overfeeding, not by performing his task more efficiently but by foolish irresponsible acts directly contrary to his rider's indications.

This then is freshness and it must not be confused with the exhilaration of a normal, healthy horse rejoicing to be in the open with good going under his feet, but it is an effect akin to intoxication. It is the venting of a horse's superfluous energy by rebellion and aggression pushed beyond the point which could reasonably be expected, taking into consideration his degree of education and his previous conduct.

It is useful to look minutely into the matter because in countless instances it contributes largely to a polo pony failing to keep his form, although with a hunter the matter is simpler. Here there is not the same necessity for such complete control or for the same accuracy of movement. If a man can avoid being unseated by a buck and is able to steer his horse for the first few fields he will probably find that 'the top is off him' and that he will have comparative peace for the rest of the day ; but, nevertheless, the hunter, amongst other accidents, is always liable to overreach and to falls, both of which may be due to over-jumping or rushing, again the result of being too fresh.

Corn (oats) is the food that has to be considered in this connection, because of its stimulating effect and because its effect varies with every horse. Not only does the amount vary that any horse can stand, but it is impossible to forecast what the effect on his mind will be. Some can 'stand corn', on others it has an effect not unlike that of alcohol on the human subject. Most of us have known men on whom one cocktail has more effect than six may have on another.

Feeding must always be considered in relation to work and exercise, and work and exercise must again be considered in relation to the amount a horse's limbs can stand.

It is therefore disastrous to attempt to feed and exercise a stud, however small, to a set standard, and it is just in this direction that skill in feeding, and stable management generally, are demonstrated so clearly.

The most conspicuous expense of a stable results from horses that prove failures, and the factors that tend to diminish the average expenses, or at all events to keep them within reasonable bounds, are the successful ones. Compare the experience of a man who has three polo ponies that play consistently well for a number of years with that of another who, through bad riding and bad stable management, has, during the same period, to replace two or three ponies that have lost their form.

An over-fresh hunter is a constant menace from the time he leaves home for the meet till a good hunt has sobered him.

The evil effects of freshness are so many and so far-reaching that it pays the horseman to give the subject the most careful thought, indeed once a horse is schooled one can say with truth that, barring an accident, there are only two factors that militate against prolonged success: bad riding and injudicious feeding. Even accidents may be due to the loss of control caused by freshness, so that we can include a fair percentage of accidents in the evil we are considering, and bad riding we are not discussing here.

The vagaries of the over-fresh horse are so many and varied that it is impossible to generalise, and in giving examples it would be wrong to maintain that they are typical, though they will, I expect, strike a familiar note in the minds of those of my readers with horsey experience.

The most outstanding example is one that has been before me for the whole of my polo-playing career. For twenty years I played polo with a club eight miles from my stable, so that my ponies had to walk sixteen miles every day they played. Polo days were Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. I found that the extra day's rest between the Wednesday and Saturday was enough to affect adversely the mouths and manners of my ponies. Observation of the play of the other members' ponies only confirmed this. I did not care to give my ponies extra work on the Friday to counteract this enforced idleness because I thought it was more important to rest their limbs and their mouths, but I got the same result by reducing their oats.

It is a mistake to buy another man's failures even if convinced that bad riding may have caused the failure. The effects of bad horsemanship are far from temporary and even re-schooling does not entirely

eradicate faults thus acquired; but I once had to take a refractory horse in part exchange for one that I was selling. My new acquisition had once been a hunter of good class but his owner, besides being a bad rider, did not hunt very regularly and his groom was not a judicious feeder. The result was that the horse, a highly strung animal, was always above himself and in his case freshness took the form of pulling, often crashing his fences, and running on when asked to stop. Severe bits had been tried till he had finished up in a Hanoverian Pelham and with the bars of his mouth badly cut. I gave him a year's rest at grass for his mouth to recover and then re-schooled him. We soon discovered that he could not stand corn, even in the smallest quantity, and he hunted two seasons with me without *one single oat*, except during the winter he was running out, and if he missed his turn hunting he had to have at least three hours' work. I sold him with due warning to his new owner, but neither he nor his groom would take my feeding and exercising instructions literally, so he was not a success.

As an extreme opposite I will cite the case of a mare I once owned. Freshness took her very differently. Too much corn and too little work made her sluggish, and if struck or spurred she would kick, but without mending her pace.

More than one pony I have owned would, when over-fresh, play polo according to their own interpretation of the situation. They would decide whether it was a back hander for which I was riding and prepare to turn and they would brace themselves every time any stick clicked on the ball as if saying 'Where now?'

Some will rear if kept waiting at a gap or a gate or as the ball is thrown in, some will be difficult to mount. Others will hang to the shelters and it is safe to say that the majority of horses when over-fresh, even if they have not a tendency to spin round and make for home, will want to return to the stable more quickly than they went out.

There is a growing tendency to keep children's ponies out at grass because it is found that they are easier to control. This, of course, is due to their vitality being lowered by hardship till their spirit is almost broken. It is preferable to keep them in the stable, clipped and groomed, on a hay diet. I venture to suggest that if the grown-ups from whom this suggestion comes were to be asked to keep their hunters at grass and ride them unclipped, dirty and ungroomed, they would rather give up hunting. It has always puzzled me why parents should advocate a treatment for their children's ponies different from anything they would tolerate for their own. It may be argued that a grown-up person is better able to take care of himself, but there are plenty of them who are bad riders, timid, nervous, self-conscious and in fact with every disability that a child has and who find a quiet, well schooled,



Why should your child's pony be kept at grass.

well stabled and experienced mount just as necessary for their comfort, safety and enjoyment.

It must be remembered that a horse is always impatient of control. He only obeys the indications of the rider because it has been demonstrated to him that obedience is the line of least resistance. If his education has been rational and has pursued a step by step course, neither his strength nor his understanding will have been unduly taxed and, more important still, he will have come to imagine that because each step follows so rationally on the last, there is no alternative to obedience and he has consequently never even suspected his own power. But there is this disadvantage, his education having had the effect of balancing him will also have made it easy for him to shy, spin round and complete other manoeuvres in direct opposition to his rider's wishes and indications. The more handy he becomes the more capable he will be of disobedient actions as well as obedient ones.

There are also two further evils which can be considered as by-products of overfeeding. Filled (swollen) legs are a sign of the constitutional disturbance which so often supervenes. There is also the exercise that has to counter the effects of a too liberal supply of oats. This is often in excess of what legs can stand. The ultimate result of both of these is an unsound horse.

The only way to avoid the evil results of freshness is to adjust work and food to suit not only every horse but every set of circumstances also. As said before, to attempt to feed a stud to a standard is the surest way to failure. But here we are up against another difficulty. It is easy to realise that as one man hunts the horse or plays the pony, and as the feeding is entrusted to another, the liaison between the two must be very complete for any degree of success to be attained.

Herein, incidentally, is displayed a great source of weakness in an international polo side. The ponies are gathered together from different owners and put in charge of grooms also collected for the occasion. Until the personnel of the team is finally decided and the ponies allocated, they are ridden first by one and then by another. For this reason the trinity of understanding that there should be between player, pony and groom cannot exist and the player can give little guidance regarding food and exercise. There is not the personal touch between player, groom and pony, who are more or less strangers.¹ Contrast this with the understanding that must exist when the horse has been broken and trained by the man who eventually hunts or plays him, and when he remains in charge of the groom who has had to look after him from his early youth and knows his idiosyncrasies. The horse that goes equally well with all riders is as rare as the man who is at home on any horse.

¹In the International matches of 1936 this was very noticeable.

CHAPTER III

QUIET WITH HOUNDS

The title of this chapter will awaken memories in the heart of every hunting man of experience.

All horses are affected by the presence of hounds. A few (so small a number as to be almost negligible) show a decided and active antipathy and do not calm down until they have got them out of sight and hearing. Most, however, will show an awakened interest, while some evince great excitement even though they may never have been out hunting before.

This awakened interest is a trait so universal that most hunting men have come to accept it without enquiring into the cause; even if the excitement is excessive they appear to regard it as inevitable and without remedy. My theory of the cause is that it can be put down to atavism, a survival of the instinct of self-preservation. The wild ancestor would rejoice in seeing an animal, belonging to the genus of its natural carnivorous enemies, hunted and slain. There seems no other way to account for a horse's keenness in a hunt, his satisfaction at a kill or the reason why he should gallop faster and with more heart when in sight and hearing of hounds than when following in the ruck.¹

Anyway, whatever the cause the actual result is that no trial of a horse is of much value to an intending purchaser unless he can ride him in a hunt and have the opportunity of studying his demeanour at covert side. The quietest and most placid may become almost beside themselves; in fact, the excitement can be so acute as to make some horses useless as hunters and others a great nuisance to their riders and a danger to the rest of the field for weeks and even months. Conversely, however, some of the most highly strung seem to look upon the presence of hounds as a prelude to a serious adventure for which it behoves them to conserve their energy.

The remedy for over-excitement in a hunt and restlessness at covert side, or better still, the best way to prevent both is worth considering.

¹We once owned for many years a keen and brilliant hunter that would go nowhere near a fox and could not be induced to jump into a field where a fox was being broken up. Others of our hunters knew better than hounds whether there was a fox in covert or not and could always predict where he would break. The latter is by no means an uncommon accomplishment.

It must be assumed that the horse has been suitably bitten by means of exhaustive experiment with almost endless variations of bits, curb chains and martingales. No easy matter this, because variations so insignificant as to appear negligible may make all the difference.

One of the most important factors, one on which success or failure largely depends, is the early experience we give a horse with hounds.

It is the frequency and the simplicity of the lessons that count, not their duration or their diversity. If the interval between them is too long, instruction has to begin afresh every time. If the seeming quietness of a horse has deceived us and tempted us to prolong a lesson, to miss a step in the sequence or to run two lessons into one, it will invariably be regretted.

Thus for the first day we should be content to ride our novice to the meet, and it is important that we should be amongst the first to arrive, when from a quiet lane or field the pupil can watch the arrival of the hunt and the other horses. Then when hounds move off to the first covert he should be sent home.

'However placidly he may stand, it is best to be content with this short first appearance; a wave of excitement may come over him if he is allowed to go on with the field; in fact, a young horse's interest often increases as the morning passes till he becomes excited and difficult. Often indeed on the second day out he is quite likely to be more excited than on the first.'¹

Thereafter his education should be gently progressive, the guiding principle being that lessons should, as said before, be short and frequent. Furthermore, they should be designed to finish calmly, never entailing a struggle or at all events one unsuccessful for the rider. The horse's demeanour must be the guide as to how quickly we can proceed and ingenuity must devise the means to insure that no new step is taken until the pupil has assimilated the last one, until after he has become calmly familiar with each set of exciting sights and sounds; in other words, until all novelty has worn off.

The time thus saved is also an important consideration. By taking a horse out for these short spells he may, with luck, have gained experience of some twenty hunting days by the middle of November.

The need for this gradual initiation is accentuated when we remember that the mere thought of a day's hunting rouses such an interest in the breast of even the most seasoned hunter that it should be the aim of the careful experienced groom to withhold from his charges the knowledge that it is a hunting morning. Otherwise they would not feed and their nerves would be so on edge that their manners would be adversely affected and their stamina impaired.

¹*Bridle Wise.*

A clever groom will be at great pains on a hunting morning to avoid as far as possible any deviation from the procedure which marks a non-hunting morning. The foundation for this deception must be laid on the ordinary exercising days and continued on hunting days. If before morning exercise the groom is careful to put in some of the routine of grooming, feeding, etc., ordinarily reserved for a hunting morning, and conversely before saddling up for the meet he can lead a horse to believe that just ordinary exercise is contemplated, calmness will pervade the atmosphere and a horse will finish his feed to the last oat. But the smallest variation of the ordinary procedure is enough to rouse suspicion. My grooms even go so far with a nervous horse as to rug him up after dressing and even to buckle on the roller; merely to leave it off would be enough to induce the thought that it is a hunting day.

Masefield writes in *Reynard the Fox*: 'The stables were alive with din from dawn until the time of meeting.' I have no hesitation in saying that if any stable were to be 'alive with din' on a hunting morning, half the horses would be walking round their boxes instead of feeding, and many of them would be in a cold sweat.

One of the most important items of stable management is that before hunting a horse should be induced to eat his ration of corn and to finish it in time for digestion to be complete, or nearly so, before he takes the road. There will have been a long gap since his last meal, and there is a long period of fasting ahead, so unless a full feed is eaten and digested, there is little chance of a horse arriving at the meet in that state of calmness and bodily content on which mental quiet largely depends. Without this mental quietude he will not retain his manners or continue to be quiet with hounds. Furthermore, without his full feed he can hardly be expected to last out the day or retain his condition throughout the season.

A hunter, like a poet, is born and not made, but if the general education of either is neglected the performance of the former will be as crude as the verse of the latter. But just as you cannot imbue a prosaic man's mind with poetic thoughts by means of a primer and a rhyming dictionary, so it is equally impossible to make a hunter of a horse that is not born with a natural aptitude for the chase. So although there is great value in a jumping lane of easy fences down which a horse can be driven unbacked and which will balance him, develop his muscles and improve his wind, a course of schooling over the most elaborate artificial fences that can be devised will be worse than useless, in that it will probably ruin his mouth or manners. I maintain this with great emphasis because if one is to judge by much of the literature on the subject, it is supposed that a protracted course of schooling over a variety of jumps is necessary to fit a horse for hunting.

Once when I was riding past a friend's paddock I saw him on a new hunter faced at a fence with his groom behind him trying to beat the horse over with a hunting whip. Now I happened to know that this horse was an accomplished hunter, as it had been bought from a friend whose daughter it had carried brilliantly, and it had only been sold because the girl had gone abroad. So I said, 'I suppose you know that is a made hunter and knows his job?' 'Oh, yes,' replied my friend, 'but So and So', mentioning a well-known writer, 'says that you should make your horse perfect at every kind of fence before you take him out.' I had read 'So and So's' book in which there is, among other absurdities, a description of a horse's first day with hounds. As far as I remember, the horse was six years old and had had two years' intensive schooling over such a variety of obstacles that every fence he encountered in the course of that hunt he was able to negotiate with ease, because he had already been *familiarised with it on the schooling ground*.

My friend was eventually persuaded to take the horse out hunting without further 'schooling' and to withhold his opinion until he had had a day on him. Although he started with the firm conviction that his horse was a refuser, he was carried faultlessly, without a single refusal or a semblance of a fall. It was lucky for him that the unwarranted treatment that this good horse had received in the paddock did not adversely affect his manners.

An irritating fault in a horse is restlessness at covert-side and it is one that definitely removes a hunter from first class. It can indeed spoil a day's hunting. We are so often told when buying a horse of its prowess in a run and of the likelihood of its winning a point to point. *But will it stand still?* This is a question that should always be asked and a point that should be verified. I once bought a hunter for my wife under circumstances that precluded a trial with hounds. She proved the most restless creature that ever wore out a side-saddle rider. At the end of the season I set about curing her, but it soon became apparent that the task would be beyond the time at my disposal and indeed beyond my patience. But I had a brain-wave. I lent her to the mounted police in a nearby town and she was put on point duty. When one rider's tour of duty finished the mare was not taken back to the stable but the relieving constable came out on his bicycle and mounted the mare. A few weeks of this treatment cured her completely and it had the great advantage of conserving the freshness of her legs.

Show jumpers make unpleasant horses to hounds. One has only to observe the style adopted by horse (and rider) to clear the made fences in a show jumping ring, which by the way appear to be specially selected to represent the kind of fence *never* met with out hunting, to realise that every spark of imagination has had to be eliminated. How other-

wise could horses be induced to jump the ridiculous collapsible fences with which they are faced? There are no problems of take-off and landing to be considered, no rabbit holes, no rotten banks; and his nerve is not shattered by the prospect of timber so stiff and unbreakable as to mean a somersault unless faultlessly cleared. Above all, the show jumper has to be made hot and impetuous and a hunter has to be cool and calculating.

The greatest contribution to quietness with hounds is the *general* education, mental and physical, which every horse ought to receive before he is taken out hunting, and this is more far-reaching than is usually supposed. It is not confined, as is so often thought, to a docile submission to guidance by the bridle. It must be extended to prompt and free obedience to the leg, a correct carriage of the head, and he must readily yield to the direct flexion. Only by attention to these points can a rider obtain the balance necessary for a horse to distribute his weight correctly and thus avoid undue fatigue; but, above all, the direct flexion insures the best position to obey the rider's lightest indications. We cannot call a horse quiet with hounds if he pulls, or if he 'runs on' when his rider wishes him to turn, or if he shows that he is so unfamiliar with heel and spur as to display his resentment by a kick on being touched with either in a crowded gateway.

What an exhibition is so often evoked by the words 'Hounds, please!' It is sometimes almost pathetic to see the efforts of a rider to line his horse up at the side of a road to face the pack. How impressive on the other hand is the horse that quietly passages and reins back into position, never stirring a foot until the pack has passed.

Horses are never so apt to kick as when there is another horse or a hound within reach of his heels, so it is no easy matter to vouch for their quietness in this respect without dangerous experiment; but we *can* avoid taking a horse out hunting until he has been made controllable and obedient.

Control and obedience are obtained through a course of schooling. The horse will learn how to interpret leg pressure, or a touch with the heel (or if necessary the spur), and will not look upon either as a meaningless annoyance to be resented by a kick at the nearest horse or hound, nor will he be decorated (and depreciated in value for the rest of his life) by a red ribbon in his tail. He can be placed alongside a gate so that his rider is in the best position to open or shut and latch it. He will stand to be mounted and will stand still at covert side. He will wait his turn at a gap or gate and he can be prevented from rushing his fences. Imbued with this spirit of obedience and confidence there will be a better chance of him boxing quietly, and nowadays not only in a railway horse-box but in a motor van or in a trailer.



"Now, ds Please!"

There is one item which contributes so materially to quietness with hounds that I have left it to the last as the most important of all, although it does not always receive the consideration it should. In taking a young horse to the early meets of his career, whether during cub-hunting or after hunting proper has begun, his diet and exercise should have been so regulated that far from being fresh, he should, on the contrary, be below par rather than above himself. Early impressions are of vital importance. The horse is an impressionable creature and with the first sight of hounds it is essential that he should be in a receptive frame of mind, which he will not be if he is overfed and under-exercised. The foolish irresponsibility of the over-fresh horse is more likely to be in evidence if he has been driven to the meet in a motor van and has missed the sobering effect of the 'hack on'.

Any new, or for that matter any experience that through bad management is associated with excitement, or that engenders differences of opinion or any semblance of a struggle, makes an adverse and lasting impression on a horse's mind, although, unfortunately, the converse does not hold good, otherwise horsemanship would be an art far easier to acquire. A lesson learnt makes a lasting impression only so long as a glimpse into a knowledge of his power can be withheld from him and so long as he will not come to realise just how far he need obey. *One minute of weakness on the part of an incompetent or nervous rider may undo months or even years of schooling.*

CHAPTER IV

EQUESTRIAN TACT

From the first day a foal is handled, the exercise of tact will avoid many of those fights for supremacy, the outcome of which is always uncertain. By making the lessons and exercises as pleasant as possible to breaker and horse, irritation to both is avoided. Any rider of experience, even if he has not actually become exasperated in the course of breaking or schooling, will call to mind occasions when his temper has been near to breaking point.

A well-known horseman, and a successful schooler of scores of horses and ponies, once asked me whether, in the whole course of my experience, I had ever schooled a horse right through without wishing at some stage or other that I had never bought him; without thinking to myself that if I could recall the transaction I would be willing to cancel it, get back my cheque and be rid of the animal. While I do not take so pessimistic a view as that, I must admit that there usually comes a time in the breaking, schooling and riding of every new horse when one has reason to ponder. Apart from some unsoundness (such as an incipient curb or a splint on the crooked foreleg that we forgave when we bought him) it is usually an exhibition of temper or waywardness that causes the wave of doubt. These occasions call for the display of 'equestrian tact', the thoughtful horseman realising that inevitably there comes a time when he must not push matters too far, when he must change the point at issue, and show, by making the task demanded easier, that obedience is the line of least resistance.

A celebrated breaker, from whom I had my early lessons as a boy, used to dismount and deliberately remove his spurs and lay aside his whip when he felt his temper rising, for he was a man of little education and less self-control, and had had on previous occasions cause to regret angry and meaningless floggings and spurrings. Owners do not like to receive their horses back from the breaker with weals and spur marks, and his own horses had sometimes been unsaleable for months for this reason. I think, too, the time it took him to dismount, unbuckle his spurs and remount, gave him a pause to pull himself together and avoid acting when in a state of blind rage.

When dealing with a horse, a man must say to himself, 'I must

never be vindictive, I am incapable of losing my temper and I will never raise my voice; I may allow my face to assume a *determined* expression if necessary, but never an *angry* one.' It is a remarkable fact that one's physical control of the expression of the countenance can affect the state of one's mind. It is difficult to give vent to anger if one deliberately maintains a calm exterior and refrains from raising the voice. It is a good plan in such moments to whistle or sing.

Another important point to bear in mind is that unless one uses the aids (hands, legs, spurs, whip and voice) rationally, the effect on the horse's mind is simply that he has been caused pain, and there is nothing educative, but only a cause for apprehension and confusion. The horse's mind is such that he has not the kind of intelligence which can connect punishment with an offence committed, unless this punishment takes the form of an opposition to the rebellious movement.

When, for instance, a horse shies at an object, he will turn his head towards it and swing his quarters away. If the rider can oppose this side movement and prevent it or correct it, well and good, but if through being taken by surprise he allows this fleeting moment to pass, he will be guilty of want of tact if he attempts to punish his mount after the shy is made. There is no means of conveying to the horse, 'What I am doing to you now is in retribution for your recent foolish display of alarm.' Possibly there was no real alarm, but being 'fresh' his shy was simply exuberance. In any case, how useless is punishment which the victim is unable to connect with his misdeed! The only result could be a feeling of surprise followed by resentment; in fact the next time he shied he would probably dash off in anticipation of the punishment which followed last time. The dreaded object would awaken a memory and induce a train of thought which in its turn would recall disagreeable consequences.

A dog will often show that he has a bad conscience, and will give away the knowledge of a misdeed committed even so far as to come for the punishment that he feels he deserves, before he can be lighthearted again. But a horse has nothing of this about him. He probably does not even know he has done wrong, but the punishment that followed his action sticks in his memory.

During the war I had under training hundreds of recruit drivers, N.C.O.'s and officers. One of my stock questions in the examinations on horse-mastership was: 'If you have a horse in your charge that becomes restless and unruly at feeding time what would you do about it?' Strange to say, the reply usually was 'Feed him last', and the explanation of this extraordinary answer was invariably 'To teach him to wait his turn'. Here we see the horse wrongly credited with the power to reason out for himself such a belated lesson. How can it possibly come

Early Bondling



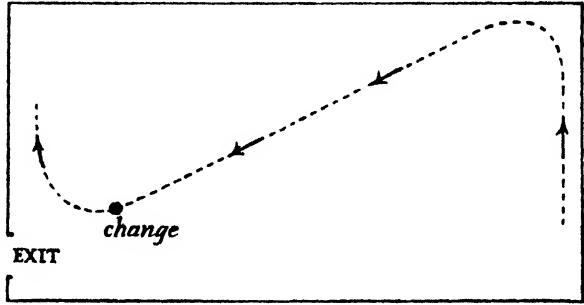
A rider often experiences difficulty in making a pony pull up smoothly. The method usually adopted is to gallop down a hedge-side, ten yards away from it, to pull up to a dead stop, jump round (turning inwards towards the hedge) and to spring forward again at the gallop.

It would seem obvious that the best way is to stop and turn at a different place every time, so that the pupil does not become routined, but at first it is more tactful to perform the manoeuvre at the *same* place every time, so that the horse, in anticipation, gathers himself together in preparation and so learns how to do the stop and turn smoothly and easily.

Then when this has become, through practice, almost effortless we can make him do it at a different place every time, and further vary the exercise by stopping him as if for the turn and then to make him spring forward again in the same direction. The value of 'routine' as a means to an end in horse-breaking must not be despised.

The attempt to cure the refuser is often mismanaged. It is necessary here to discover first whether the horse is suffering from pain or unsoundness. Needless to say, these adverse conditions must be removed before the horse is asked to jump again. Should, however, the refusal be unaccountable, the breaker must be guided by the horse's disposition and previous performances in selecting a method of correction. Beating or spurring in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred is *not* the way, and, further, the man in whose hands the horse has learned to refuse is *not* the one to undertake its correction.

Horses at grass sometimes have to be brought in nightly for shelter. If they are difficult to catch for this purpose it means that a want of tact has been displayed. The best method is this: when the animal is turned out a convenient hour should be selected, and it should be before feeding. He should be taken to the gate and whilst still held should be fed from a salver, while the groom gives the particular whistle or call which he is going to use when he wishes the animal to come to him. The next day, if he goes to the gate at the same hour with the salver of oats, and gives the same call, the animal will come to him immediately and will allow itself to be caught. It will generally be found that after about two or three times the animal will be waiting for him. This method saves time and avoids the necessity of chasing and cornering him.



To ask a green horse to change legs here would be tactless as he would be turning away from the exit.

Tightening girths and grooming can afford elementary examples. If a horse lays back his ears and snaps at the groom we may be certain that rough methods have been used. In common with other dealings with the horse, it is a short process to get them resentful, and very tedious and slow (often impossible) to restore confidence.

It cannot be sufficiently stressed that in every problem provided by the horse's resistance to control, thought and intelligence will suggest tactful solution. Roughness, and with it the infliction of pain, will only cause misunderstanding and increase the difficulty.

The best results will, of course, be obtained when a step-by-step system of breaking and schooling has been adopted; the rider can then, at any time, go back to some previous exercise that the horse can and will perform, and again work forward from that.

PART II
HORSE MASTERY

CHAPTER I

GOOD HANDS

The possession of good hands is generally considered the most essential attribute of advanced horsemanship, but only too often it is allowed to overshadow equally important considerations.

No definition can be concise, as there is none simple enough to fit so complex a subject. Good hands are a rare possession, although few riders will confess to shortcomings in this direction; indeed, I have read that one would offend a man less by suggesting that he was light fingered than that he was heavy handed.

There are other expressions in current use besides 'good hands' and 'bad hands'. There are also 'light hands' and 'heavy hands'; and the word 'hands' alone is sometimes used in commendation without any qualifying adjective. This is ignoring the various slang expressions such as 'mutton fisted', or a man can be said to have 'no hands', and I once heard a rider well described as having a 'light seat and a firm hand'.

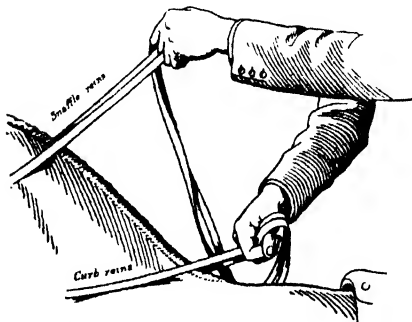
As we shall see in 'Good Legs' the rider must be convinced that a horse cannot be efficiently guided and controlled by the use of the hands alone. The attempt to do so will in time spoil any horse, no matter how well he may be broken and schooled; and, of course, it is an axiom that no horse can be broken and schooled if the use of the legs is neglected. The difficulty in making this clear is that the use of hands and arms is *instinctive* in emergency, and the use of the legs is not, and it is therefore more difficult to teach and train a rider in their use. So, in considering the question of 'hands', the efficient and appropriate application of the legs must be taken for granted.

A rider's hands are *good* when he is capable of acting on the bit with precision, but without undue emphasis, in all circumstances and in such a way as to make his wishes clear to his mount even if he is not able to exact instant obedience from a badly broken or rebellious horse.

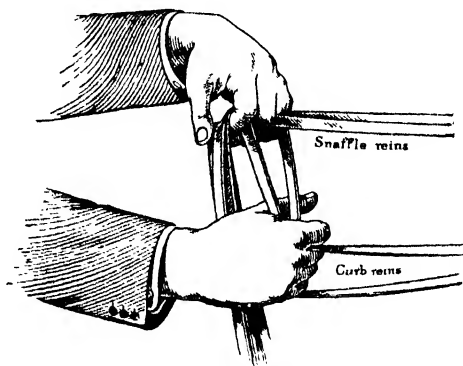
Bad hands will act on the bit incorrectly through ignorance or inadvertence, either because the rider has not sufficient knowledge how to use them in certain circumstances or because he has to use the reins to retain or regain his balance.

Hands are *heavy* because force is used in excess of what is necessary. This comes about either through a want of consideration of a horse's sensibility or because the rider is lacking in finesse.

So it will be seen that while heavy hands can never be good, light hands through want of knowledge may be bad, and good hands must always be light and used with understanding and sympathy.



Raising the horse's head preparatory to obtaining the direct flexion.



The horse's head raised and play on the curb completing the direct flexion.

Under certain only too common conditions, light hands can become bad hands—for instance, if the rider allows himself to become exasperated or if he uses the reins to maintain his balance.

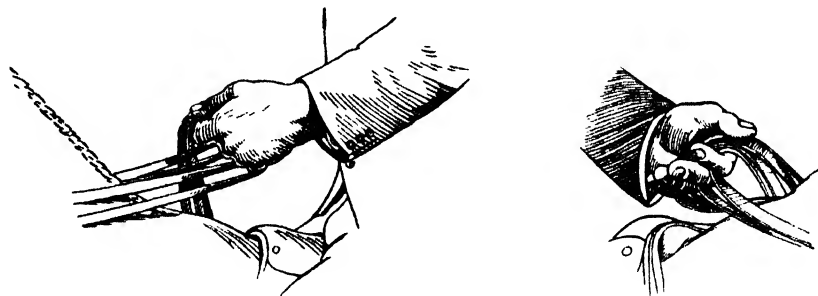
As is well known (or ought to be), the reins constitute only 50 per cent. of the means of the rider's control of his mount. The other half is made up of leg indications and the adjustment of the rider's weight. A correctly broken horse pays attention to all these and responds at once. If, owing to an insecure (loose) seat, a rider's balance is only slightly displaced, even this slight displacement constitutes an indication, and to regain the balance thus lost, some leg pressure at least is necessary, but oftener still the reins are also called to the rider's aid—again unintentionally and often unconsciously. In these instances the horse obeys or prepares to obey and in response makes some movement that the rider neither desires nor is prepared for. It will be seen when these facts are realised how important a firm seat is for hands to be good.

But these remarks are applicable only to the well-broken horse, one that obeys legs and reins and that also reacts to the redistribution of the rider's weight. If he has *not* been well broken and the leg conveys little or nothing to him, there will not be, it is true, the same confusion, but the inexpert rider will have got into the habit of steadying himself

by the reins, and in this instance the horse's mouth soon loses its sensitiveness and becomes 'a hard mouth'. The tragedy is that it makes no difference whether the faulty indications are given intentionally or unintentionally, the result to the horse's mouth is the same.

Contrary to popular belief, men are not born with good hands; another fallacy is that good hands cannot be acquired. Assuming, as before, a firm seat, good hands come through a combination of a natural aptitude, expert tuition and assiduous practice.

'Natural aptitude' also requires some definition. When a man is so proportioned that he settles easily into the saddle and naturally adopts the conventional seat, good hands will come to him quickly. If, on the contrary, the shape of his legs prevents him 'sitting close', and if, in addition, his centre of gravity is high owing to short legs and heavy shoulders, he will have to spend much time in acquiring a firm seat. During this probation he will have to go through a period of bad hands of which he may never cure either himself (or his horse) of the faults acquired. Further, for this natural aptitude he must possess the faculty of instantly translating thought into action, so that when some rein (or leg) indication is called for, the interval between realisation and application should be as short as possible—indeed, the two should be practically simultaneous.



Diagonal equitation. How the reins should be held in one hand. The pressure of the thumb prevents slipping.

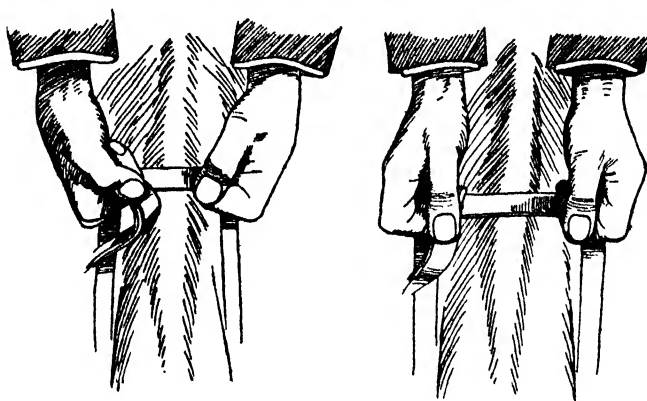
Expert tuition may be obtained from a competent teacher in a riding school, but practice must be divided into categories.

There is, in the first place, the manual dexterity in actually handling the reins. As children we were made to practise with a bridle or the straps of our parents' field glasses fastened to the back of one chair while we sat on the other. I commend this to all beginners, not only as a time-saving method but also because it avoids much misunderstanding with one's horse.

The object of the other kind of practice is to attain to the appropriate, skilled and *timely* application of hand and leg. This can only come to a man after many years of riding a variety of horses under conditions varying from the riding of a made horse to the training of one to the *haute école*. The time is, however, materially shortened if a school and a competent teacher are available.

This expert tuition is essential for learning the correct position of arm, wrist, hand, fingers and thumbs: for without this, good hands cannot exist. It is also essential for the pupil to be told why a horse fails to respond and what faulty indication has been used.

The only way of giving practical instruction through a book of this sort is by illustration, and those accompanying should be studied together with the letterpress under each.



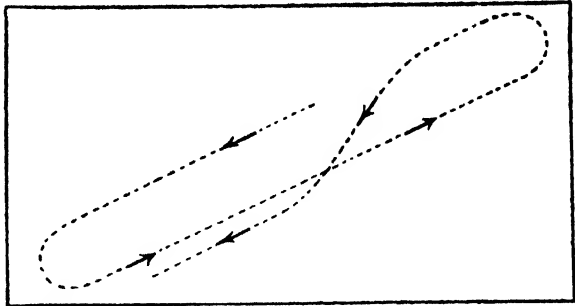
The straight wrist and the bent wrist. With the former the pull must be with the arms. With the latter the bent wrists act as springs.

A good teacher will also be able to demonstrate what I can here only state in theory, viz., that the reins are means of communication and not instruments of force. It is instructive to ask ourselves in this connection, on the one hand, why a horse should stop when we pull the reins, and on the other hand, how he becomes a 'puller'.

(1) In using the reins from the saddle it is obvious that in stopping a horse there is no mechanical effect possible, because what is known in mechanics as the 'force' (the rider) is one with 'weight' (the horse). So the only effect we can hope for must be moral; the horse in his mind must come to look upon the bit as being as impassable as a wall. The way to initiate this association of ideas is in the first place by means of long-rein driving; here, the force being on the ground, the effect of a pull on the reins is physical and mechanical as well as mental. Then, when the horse is mounted, the walls of the school are used to complete

and refine this association of ideas. The voice can also help materially if the horse has been correctly taught to associate a gentle tone of voice with ease and cessation from work and a sharp threatening one with correction by hand and leg.

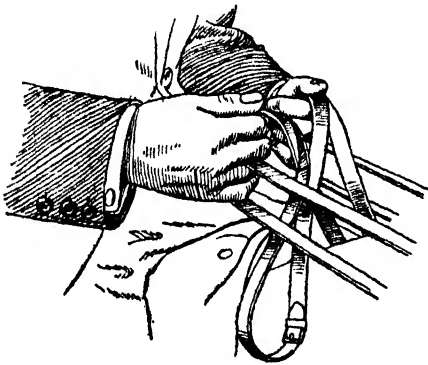
(2) By practice and never-flagging attention, *reciprocal* communication between horse and rider must be established. Not only has the rider to make his wishes known to the horse, but through the reins, his legs and seat and also by



Showing path to make the best use of the school walls in teaching a horse to pull up.

watching the horse's ears and general demeanour he must anticipate the intentions of his mount, especially if such intention indicates a movement deliberately in opposition to his wishes.

(3) 'Pulling' is a cumulative vice. Someone must begin it, either the horse or the rider. A rough and ready way of putting this is to say



Lateral equitation. The reins in both hands when riding a green horse or one that is playing up.

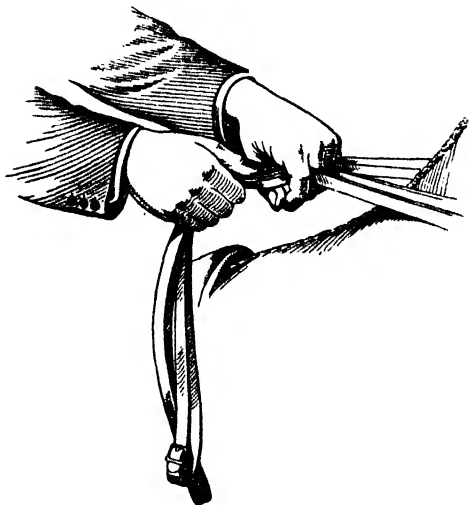
'He won't pull at you unless you pull at him'. A great exponent wrote: 'You can't stop a horse by pulling at his mouth, any more than by pulling at his tail, or the handles of a bike—nor hold him up neither.' (Dick Heathen in *Rum 'Uns to Follow*.) But it goes deeper than this.

The rider must so refine his aids that he is never using his legs or hands in excess of requirements. But as, on the other hand, he must use them with sufficient force to gain his ends, it will be seen that considerable skill is needed to preserve this delicate

balance. If either leg or hand is used with too much force they react on each other, and the horse, to escape the pain due to this rough handling, will either raise or lower his head and neck to transfer the pull of the bit from the bars of his mouth to the less sensitive corner of his lips. The bit then ceases to function, control is lost, and riding degenerates into a matter of 'pull devil, pull baker'.

(4) As, therefore, a fruitful source of pulling and rebellion is a faulty carriage of head and neck, the horseman must learn to use his

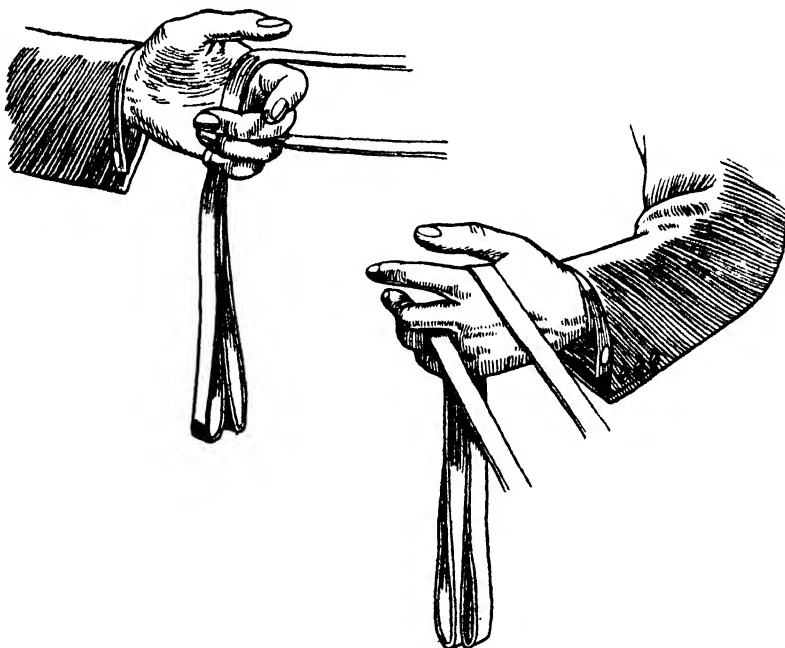
hands (always in conjunction with his legs), in the first place to induce a horse to carry himself well, and in the second place to prevent his putting his head and neck in a position that makes pulling and rebellion possible.



How to shorten the reins. To lengthen them allow them to slip through the fingers.

(5) The old riding masters used to tell their pupils that they should imagine that the reins would break if pulled too hard.

(6) For the early lessons in handling the reins, and for practice, a snaffle with two reins should be used. One rein slightly wider than the other should be at the top and the narrower rein through a martingale at the bottom. These should be used as if attached to a snaffle and curb respectively, and the play between the one and the other practised.



When using the long reins the hands should be held as for driving. The little finger holds the reins.



Stop - gaining and loss of control.

This chapter would be incomplete without a word on women's hands. One often hears that women have better hands than men. When they ride side-saddle their seat is so secure that it is independent of the reins, so to this extent they can have *lighter* hands. Then, as leg pressure is not possible, this is better than the confusion arising from haphazard indications; also, as they are not so strong, their rein indications are lighter, for which reason their horses go more kindly with them. Another important factor is psychological. Women naturally use persuasion to gain their ends, and brute force, which is so often a man's first recourse, never occurs to them. But their horses must be well broken, for there can be no real comfort or safety from a side-saddle over an imperfectly broken animal. When they ride astride it usually happens that, unlike their brothers, they have gone to the trouble of taking a course of riding lessons, as they are vainer and also quite rightly do not wish to risk too many falls.

I should like, in conclusion, to exhort my readers to study closely this question of good hands and how to acquire them, bearing in mind that anyone of intelligence and perception can learn. It is important to realise how much is dependent on theory and practice, no matter to what extent natural aptitude exists and no matter how much *untutored* practice may come their way.

It is important to realise how good hands will add to a rider's enjoyment, because his horses will go more kindly with him.

It is important to realise the economic aspect, because with good hands he will make a greater success of his horses.

It is most important of all to realise the absence of discomfort—both mental and physical—his horse enjoys through being handled with skill and sympathy.

'There is no time in a rider's career when he can say that he has reached finality in any department of riding and horsemanship, and "hands" are no exception. He can always, to quote Fillis, be "refining his aids". Most horsemen can look back with great interest and make a comparison between the delicate use of the aids to which they have attained and their crude early efforts.'¹

¹*Bridle Wise.*

CHAPTER II

GOOD LEGS

In the last chapter, 'Good Hands', everyone who has been on a horse, and many who have not, will have realised the significance of the title. Most people think they know what is meant by 'Good Hands', but the present subject is seldom treated with the deference it deserves.

For a rider to have good legs he must be capable of two things. In the first place he must be able to apply the leg aids correctly so that they act in conjunction with his hands in guiding and controlling a well-schooled horse. In the second place he must be able to train an unschooled horse to respond correctly to leg indications, again always in strict conjunction with the hands. In learning to ride, the student must acquire the first of these arts, and in time and with experience and tuition he must attain to the second. There is no riding worthy of the name without leg control, and no finished horsemanship without the ability to teach a horse to obey leg indications. It is necessary for the riding master to impress on his pupil the necessity for this dual control from the earliest days.

To attain efficiency in leg and hand control we must presuppose a firm seat, not only independent of the hand, but also one that allows that part of the leg from the knee to the foot to be used freely. It is just as much against good riding for the lower part of the leg to be cramped in an effort to obtain security in the saddle as for the hand to clutch at the reins for the same purpose.

It here becomes necessary to dwell briefly on the racing seat so as to appreciate the contrast between this and the hunting and polo seat. It must be realised that the former, whatever advantage it may have, gives a minimum, the latter a maximum of security and control.

One must, of course, assume that security in the saddle is the steeplechase jockey's first desire; for one thing, his horse cannot win without him, but I have heard sarcastic allusions to 'semi-voluntary pessimistic falls', and have read that 'Seven tosses out of ten occur because the rider is not concentrating his thoughts upon remaining in the saddle; and another two of those ten are due to the rider's determination to *leave* the saddle.'¹ The same author adds, 'It is clear from

¹*Horse-sense and Sensibility*, Crascredo.

the picture-paper snapshots of professional jockeys engaged upon their profession, that they have long since made all necessary arrangements for quitting the saddle. In no other way can you explain the pea-in-a-pod positions which, according to the George Washington camera, our jockeys adopt in riding over fences. Small blame to them. It is their profession. If a barrister, for example, were liable to be flung into the well of the court at any moment during his speech for the Crown he would probably address the court on all fours.' But these views are perhaps too pessimistic and uncomplimentary.

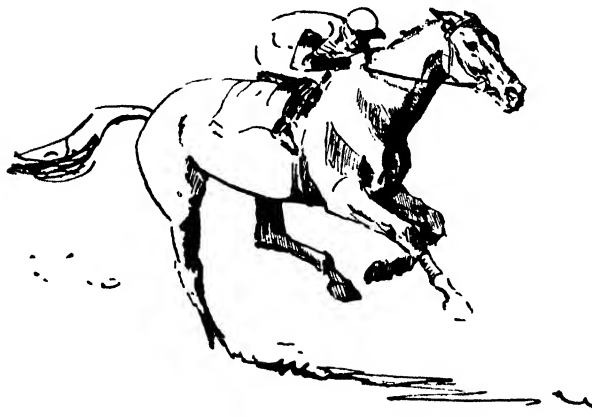
It must further be realised that there is only one effective place to apply spur or heel: fairly low down, and just behind the girth *but in no other place*. For the purpose of control, therefore, the flat-race jockey has no legs at all, but it may be that some subtle countervailing advantage is gained. A trainer whom I have consulted gives it as his opinion that it is an advantage to remove the heels of an unskilled and uncontrolled rider from their 'sphere of influence', rather than to leave them in a position to do more harm than good by excited haphazard applications in a close race. He adds that given greater knowledge and skill in the use of the leg he would prefer to see jockeys ride in the normal position. So it is important to weigh in the balance on the one hand the loss of control that the shortened stirrup entails, and on the other hand the problematic extra speed obtained. This becomes important nowadays, as not only is the steeplechase jockey pulling up his stirrups, but hunting men are showing a tendency to do so too.

In flat racing the idea is, of course, to sacrifice everything to speed, and the theory is that by throwing the weight of the rider forward, the horse's hind limbs, where the mechanism of propulsion is situated, are freed from weight, and their efficiency thereby increased. A second theory is that by leaning well forward over or alongside the horse's neck, wind resistance is diminished.¹ Both of these are important points, but it is worth considering whether the forward weight and this streamline could not be obtained without the loss of control and security which the jockey seat entails. As said before, this consideration is specially important to-day, because of the growing tendency in steeplechasing to shorten leathers in imitation of the flat race jockey.

It is also interesting to consider how the short racing stirrup leather came into vogue, at all events in England. It dates from the invasion of that great artist, Tod Sloan, who descended with such startling results on English racing in October 1897. Although the 'American seat' had really made its first appearance in 1895 with the coloured jockey Simms,

¹The chief aim and object in adopting the modern jockey seat is to produce a 'streamline'. If the position of the best jockeys is studied one can see that they are fairly successful in obtaining it. When one considers the slight distance by which races are won the reduction of wind resistance is important.

it was left to Sloan to capture the popular fancy for riding with short leathers. This jockey had a great talent for winning races; in fact, he revolutionised race riding by jumping his horse into its stride as the



The flat race jockey trying for a streamline.

gate went up, and by maintaining the highest possible speed throughout. He had abandoned the established custom of riding a waiting race culminating in a strong finish.

Not only was it found that Sloan's method was the quickest way of getting from starting gate to winning post, but he had in addition a great knack, amounting some say to genius, of getting away quickly, of not interfering with his horse,

and of knowing whether it was doing its best. He was successful; he won his early races, and there was great competition to secure his services, with the result that he got the choice of the best mounts. In his first year, he had 20 winners with 58 mounts, and his success culminated in 153 winners out of 364 in 1899. He thus came to be looked upon as almost invincible. Trainers, owners and jockeys, taking no cognizance of his make and shape (he was a tiny man with diminutive legs) or of his genius for race riding, put down his success to his peculiar seat. Every jockey tried to imitate the only point which his limited imagination could envisage, and no jockey would have been entrusted with a mount unless he had copied him.

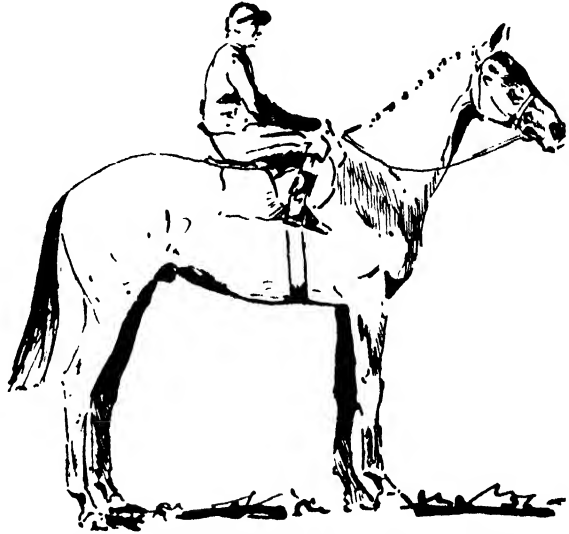
Whether there is any virtue in the shortened stirrup is open to doubt, and it is difficult to see how it can ever be decided unless some jockey were to appear who rode successfully with the longer leathers, and obtained enough winning mounts to prove the success of his method. The result would, of course, be a swing back to the old graceful seat of Archer, Fordham, Loates, Cannon, and the other great men of that generation.

Here we will leave the racing seat, and abler and more experienced men than I must decide whether wind resistance and the shortened stirrup leathers is not a theory designed to fit the successful Tod Sloan riding and the modern racing seat, or whether the same advantage cannot be obtained in combination with the control which the longer stirrup-leather gives. But it was necessary to touch upon it briefly because in

discussing 'leg' we must remember, as said before, that for the purposes of control the flat race jockey has no legs at all. On the contrary, we must emphasize the advantage of what may be called the antithesis of it, the hunting and polo seat.

The first thing to consider is to what extent leg control can be obtained without the spur. The theory of this is akin to that of biting. Horses' mouths vary in nervous sensibility and call for bits of varying incisiveness. Furthermore, mouths vary in sensitiveness as the horse's education proceeds, so that a keen bit has sometimes to be used to teach and emphasize a special lesson or exercise.

In exactly the same way the sides of horses vary in sensitiveness, so that spurs may have to be used either regularly with an unresponsive, lazy horse, or more often temporarily with a well-bred, energetic horse to teach and emphasize a certain lesson or exercise. It is not difficult to grade bits in their order of severity, but to grade the leg aid is not so easy, because it requires skill in applying it in



The flat racing seat showing the jockey's ineffective leg and heel.

such a way that effects may be differentiated. The most emphatic and direct effect can be obtained with a spur with a rowel. This, however, is too severe for most well-bred horses, although it may be useful at odd times for a special lesson; but the rowelled spur should be discarded as soon as possible for the dummy spur, this in turn may be left off altogether for the rider to rely on his bare heel, which in turn can be followed by mere leg pressure as the horse becomes trained.

Broadly speaking, the better bred the horse the less the spur will be required, and of the three fatal misuses of the spur the most pernicious is to continue to use it after a horse has learnt to give way to the leg.

The second fatal mistake, one that runs number one very close, is to use spur, or heel for that matter, before a horse has been taught its meaning.

The third erroneous use is to look upon the spur as a means of punishment.

Having enunciated the misuses of the spur, let us turn for a moment to positive as distinct from negative argument, and consider its use. It has only one. The spur is to emphasize the touch of the heel and of leg pressure. If a rider is dissatisfied with the response he obtains with the leg he should use his heel; if that fails to satisfy him there is the dummy spur, which in turn can be replaced by the spur with a rowel.

So disastrous, however, is the result of keeping on too long with the spur, that it is better to err on the side of leniency, leaving it off even if it has to be resumed later.

The evil effects are many. A horse may be made permanently hot, he may get into the way of kicking, and he may be driven into the habit of mind which is in turn reflected in his powers. If a horse in his work lays back his ears and swishes his tail, this is merely the outward sign of discomfort, nearly always the result of over-spurring at some time, and with a mare there are often other unpleasant manifestations. Anyway, a horse that is swishing his tail is constricted in his movements, and is seldom doing his best; any of these faults is bad enough in a hunter, but disastrous in a polo pony or racehorse.

It is not the province of this book to give elementary instruction, so it would be out of place to describe how to initiate a horse into the meaning of the spur, the heel, and leg pressure. This has been done minutely in *Bridle Wise*. Suffice it to say that beginning on foot with a whip he must be prepared by successive stages to move away from anything that touches him within the magic area described. If one were to use a spur on him without this preparation, he would treat a touch with it exactly as he would the sting of a fly. He would press against it, try to rub it off against anything handy, swish his tail, cow-kick at it, even throw himself down.

When we consider punishment, it becomes necessary to generalise. We cannot punish a horse; we can only act in opposition to his rebellious movements. A horse is controlled by oppositions. He has not the reasoning power to connect pain inflicted on him with a misdeed. There is nothing in his mental equipment to inform him that the pain you are inflicting is in retribution for a past misdeed. All one can do in this direction is to oppose an unwanted movement with the appropriate aids.

Not only must the appropriate aids be used, but they must be used appropriately. That is to say, leg and hand must be correctly *timed*. This, again, is more far reaching than may appear at first sight. Timing, in so far as it refers to co-ordination of hand and leg, belongs to ordinary riding, and can be acquired with sound tuition; but to apply the leg aid to synchronise with the *horse's* movements is something far more subtle and requires great skill and nervous perception on the part of the rider. The moments when the legs can be successfully ap-

plied are fleeting, and to apply them at other times is worse than useless, because it would be demanding a movement which a horse is not in a position to make. This is specially noticeable in teaching a horse to change his lead with his hind legs, at the canter, when there is just one fraction of a second when a horse is in a position to make the change. Only by experience can a rider feel this moment and to apply the aids at any other is worse than useless.

It applies equally when trying for an increase of pace. Indiscriminate spurring will simply make a horse cringe, and will thus slow him down; but if leg or spur be applied as the hind feet come to the ground the horse will be stimulated to strike back with increased vigour.

So it will be seen that to attain good legs requires acute perception, theoretical knowledge and unremitting practice. Actually there can be no such thing as good hands without good legs, and of the two the latter is harder to acquire, because the use of the hand is more instinctive and therefore comes more naturally, but it should be the object of the riding master to train his pupil to use his leg as instinctively as he uses his hand.

There are two infallible tests, not only of good legs, but of a horse's training also. A rider ought to be able to make his well-broken horse canter along a narrow track, say $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards wide, changing his legs (hind legs as well as forelegs) at every stride, every other stride, or with any other interval, at will. These changes should be made without leaving the track, and in response to leg and hand indications only, and they should involve no change of direction.

The second test is one where the use of the leg predominates. Here the rider must be able to make his horse move forward from the rein-back, at the walk, trot, or canter (on either leg) at will. To convey to a horse by varying the intensity of leg pressure which of the three paces is wanted, and in the case of the canter on which leg it is to be, requires great refinement of touch.

In conclusion, the rider who aspires to good legs must, in addition to everything laid down in this chapter, bear in mind the adage, '*ars est celare artem.*' The onlooker should not be able to detect the use he is making of his legs (or hands either for that matter) if he is riding a made pony, or a well-broken hunter or hack. The great horsemen cannot be seen to use their legs, and possibly this is the reason why the leg aid is so universally neglected by the uninitiated.

CHAPTER III

A GOOD SEAT

Riding on horseback as it survives to-day, in spite of various attempts to change it, is the accumulated experience of thousands of years, and the present-day seat varies from that of the ancients only because the modern horse is, by its conformation, more suitable for carrying a man and is on the average fully six inches taller. Further, modern saddles have been so improved in design and manufacture that the rider can more nearly adopt the natural seat.

If we look at the ancient drawings and sculptures of men on horseback we are at once struck by the smallness of the horses, the thick upright shoulders and the clumsy ill-fitting saddles. Riders came, in course of time, to realise that those horses which had a certain conformation and especially oblique shoulders carried the saddle farther back, and the farther back the saddle the greater the comfort to the rider, the greater his safety, and the less the jar on the horse's forelegs. Breeders, therefore, selected mares and stallions with this desirable conformation, with the result that through the generations there has been a steady improvement in the general conformation of the saddle horse and especially in the slope of the shoulder. So the main difference between the ancient seat and that of the present day is that the rider is enabled to sit farther back, more in the centre of the horse, *i.e.* with his centre of gravity midway between the points of support, the fore feet and the hind feet.

The extra height of the horse has caused the stride to be lengthened and has made it more difficult to 'sit down' in the saddle at the faster pace. This calls for a further modification of the rider's poise. Anyone who wishes to study this point should ride a gallop on a 14 h. 3 in. polo pony and then on a 17 h. hunter.

The improvement in the design and fitting of saddles enables the rider to sit closer to his horse. This refers not only to the distance between his seat and the horse's back, but also to the distance between his knees and the horse's sides.

There have been during the last fifty years certain modifications in military saddles and in the position and poise of those who use them. Soldiers now rise at the trot, and so have to ride with a shorter stirrup

THE ENGLISH SEAT IN JUMPING



THE HUNTING SEAT



(By kind permission of Mr. Tom Taylor, Warrington)

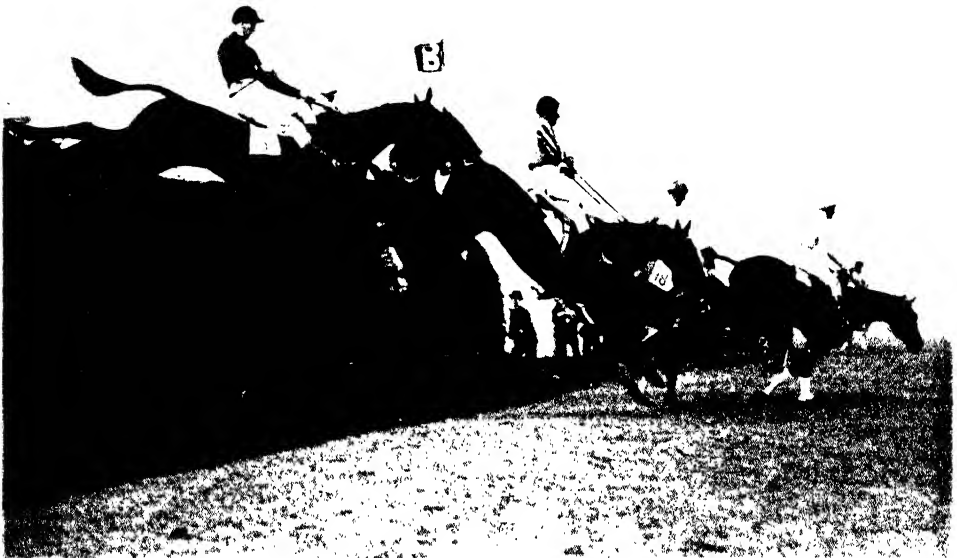
THE SHOW-JUMPING SEAT

THE ENGLISH SEAT IN JUMPING



(By kind permission of the "Dudley Mail", Manchester)

THE HURDLING SEAT



THE STEEPLECHASE SEAT

leather. To meet this alteration the seat of a military saddle is now flatter and is almost the same as that of a hunting saddle. The old-fashioned military seat was abandoned when rising in the stirrups with shortened leathers was substituted for 'bumping' in the saddle. The new cavalry seat is unquestionably an improvement, and there is no chance of going back to the seat which so often resulted in riding strain if not something worse.

Close observation of the best riders to hounds and at polo shows us that there is a stereotyped seat with only such variation in the essentials as is caused by the difference in horses' and men's individual make and shape.

The points that support a man on horseback are his seat bones, thighs, knees, and his feet in the stirrups. Of these the only one that should be constant is the position of the knees, and they should be as far back as the conformation of the horse allows. Although the weight on the seat ought to be lightened at certain paces, the leg from the knee downwards should not move except when the heel or spur has to be used.

As long as the horse is standing, walking or cantering, the seat bears practically all the weight, and the body should be vertical, the head erect and the back neither hollowed nor rounded. But when the horse increases his pace his movements become more violent and the rider is obliged to adopt modifications. At the trot, his knees and thighs take a larger portion of the weight as he rises, and the stirrups also a certain amount of it. The axis of the body is no longer vertical but inclined slightly forward. At the gallop the body should again incline forward and the seat should be just clear of the saddle. Here the weight is entirely carried by the thighs, knees and stirrups. The stronger the rider the more the weight can be on the knees and thighs and the longer he can keep it there; but in the case of a weaker man, or towards the end of a tiring gallop, he will have to call on the stirrups to bear an increase of weight. If we try to sit down in the saddle at the gallop we find that the exertion is beyond us and, except in the case of a well-shaped pony or an exceptionally smooth horse, we are, to some extent, bounced up and down. The result is that sometimes when the saddle is coming up our weight is going down, and the result of these bumps is quickly to exhaust us and our horse. In order to keep the weight off the seat and on the knees, we are obliged to lean forward.

At polo, with the shorter-striding, well-trained pony, we are able to sit down and hold ourselves erect, and further, it must be taken into consideration that an eight minute chukker on smooth ground on a well-balanced pony is a very different matter from a long gallop on a strong galloping horse on soft and uneven going.

SKILLED HORSEMANSHIP



Balance

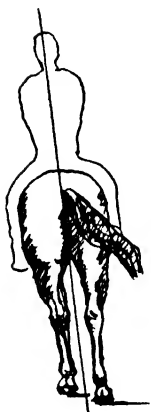
It is said that one keeps one's seat by 'balance' and not by grip. This needs to be explained. If the axis of our body remained in the same line as the axis of the horse, the rider's weight when going straight forward, and centrifugal force when turning, would be sufficient to keep him in the saddle; any slight deviation from this position necessitates grip with one leg (thigh and knee) slightly more than the other, in order to regain our position in the vertical plane. This, with practice, becomes automatic, and then the more we can co-ordinate the muscles of the right and left legs so that one does not overpower the other, the less exertion it will require to keep ourselves erect in the middle of the saddle. When this exertion has been reduced to a minimum, it is 'balance'.

The rider's displacement forwards or backwards can be ignored; balance in these directions (although important for a good seat) is not so easily lost and therefore does not play such an important part in *security* of seat as does the balance to counteract lateral displacement.

At a jump, or if a horse makes unexpected movements (especially if he deviates from the straight, starts forward or stops), it will be necessary to grip. The *constant* grip, however, should be so light that even after the longest day in the saddle, with a score of jumps, no matter how tired one may be and however stiff one may become, the adductors, or gripping muscles, should not be noticeably affected.

Centrifugal force, mentioned above, will be better understood if we consider the circus rider, standing on her horse cantering round the ring. The horse must lean towards the inside to counteract centrifugal force, and the rider has also to incline to the inside for the same reason, therefore her axis and that of the horse remain in the same line. This is balance, with no more grip than can be obtained by the rider's feet assisted by resin, with which the horse's back is always sprinkled for these bare-back feats. If she stood in a position perpendicular to the ground, centrifugal force would cause her to fall off to the outside of the ring, just as, if she leant inwards too much, she would fall to the inside.

To have attained a *good* seat a rider must not only be able to stick on a rough, refractory or shying horse, but he must throughout keep his weight in the place he wishes



Balance in turning



Balance lost



The Forward Seat is never seen in the Grand National.

and be able to use the aids effectively. He must be so secure that he can use his legs and hands up to the moment that a horse 'takes off' at a jump, and, while still pressing his legs, he must then leave the mouth absolutely alone until the horse has landed with all his four feet and is moving on. He must, further, sit so securely that he does not give any unintended indication with leg or hand to a horse in danger of falling. In no circumstances must the heels and hands take any part in obtaining this security. A good seat can only be attained by long practice, preferably under a competent teacher, who will see that his pupil adopts the conventional position, attitude and poise, modified by his particular make and shape.

It serves no useful purpose to set down rules. The beginner has no idea whether he is following these rules or not, and unless there is someone to correct him constantly, he will contract bad habits and never have either a firm or an elegant seat, and one may say that these terms are synonymous. This holds good of every sport and game. No one can become first class unless he has good style and ease of poise. One has only to watch our leading skaters, golfers, lawn-tennis players to realise this. Something can be learnt by imitation, and convenient shop windows as the beginner rides through villages will show a rider by his reflection how he is sitting. There is always a large mirror in well-equipped riding schools in which pupils can see themselves as they ride past. This serves the dual purpose of confirming the rude remarks passed on their appearance by their teacher, and may prevent them showing themselves in public before they have attained some slight degree of proficiency. There is much drudgery entailed in the early lessons until one begins to feel secure, and there is nothing for it but to persevere. The beginner will wonder how he can ever become proficient; as he becomes proficient he will wonder how he could have been so inept at first, so there is no need to be discouraged.

It is often debated at what age boys and girls should begin to ride in order to acquire a good seat. All fine horsemen and women have begun quite young, and provided they are strong, well-grown, and *if a suitable narrow pony is procured*, there is no reason why children should not begin when they are seven or eight. The early lessons should be of the simplest, and then, when ten or twelve years old, proper riding instruction by a competent teacher should begin. From this time onward their ponies should be big enough for a light man to ride occasionally, as otherwise they learn tricks owing to the difficulty of keeping them exercised and mastered.

As the horse rises at a jump the rider's chest will have to approach the horse's neck, and during the descent on landing his shoulders will have to approach the horse's loins. The words 'Lean forward' and 'Lean

back', are apt to create a wrong impression, because the important point to bear in mind is the position of the body with regard to the vertical. It will be noticed that in instantaneous photographs of riders jumping, those who have preserved this position give the most secure and graceful impression.

When taking off at a fence, it is further essential to adopt a position which ensures that we are not left behind by the shock of propulsion which would result in the rider's weight coming on to the reins. This will balk a horse and in time turn him into a refuser, in anticipation of the resulting jerk to his mouth. Then, on landing, we have to adopt a position to counteract the shock of landing. If the descent is steep or the speed great the rider's shoulders will almost have to touch the horse's back, as can be seen in the snapshots of the Grand National.

So far I have considered only the old-fashioned English hunting seat, which riders on the Continent and in America profess to have abandoned in favour of the forward seat; much controversy has raged round this subject. In an American magazine devoted to the horse we read:

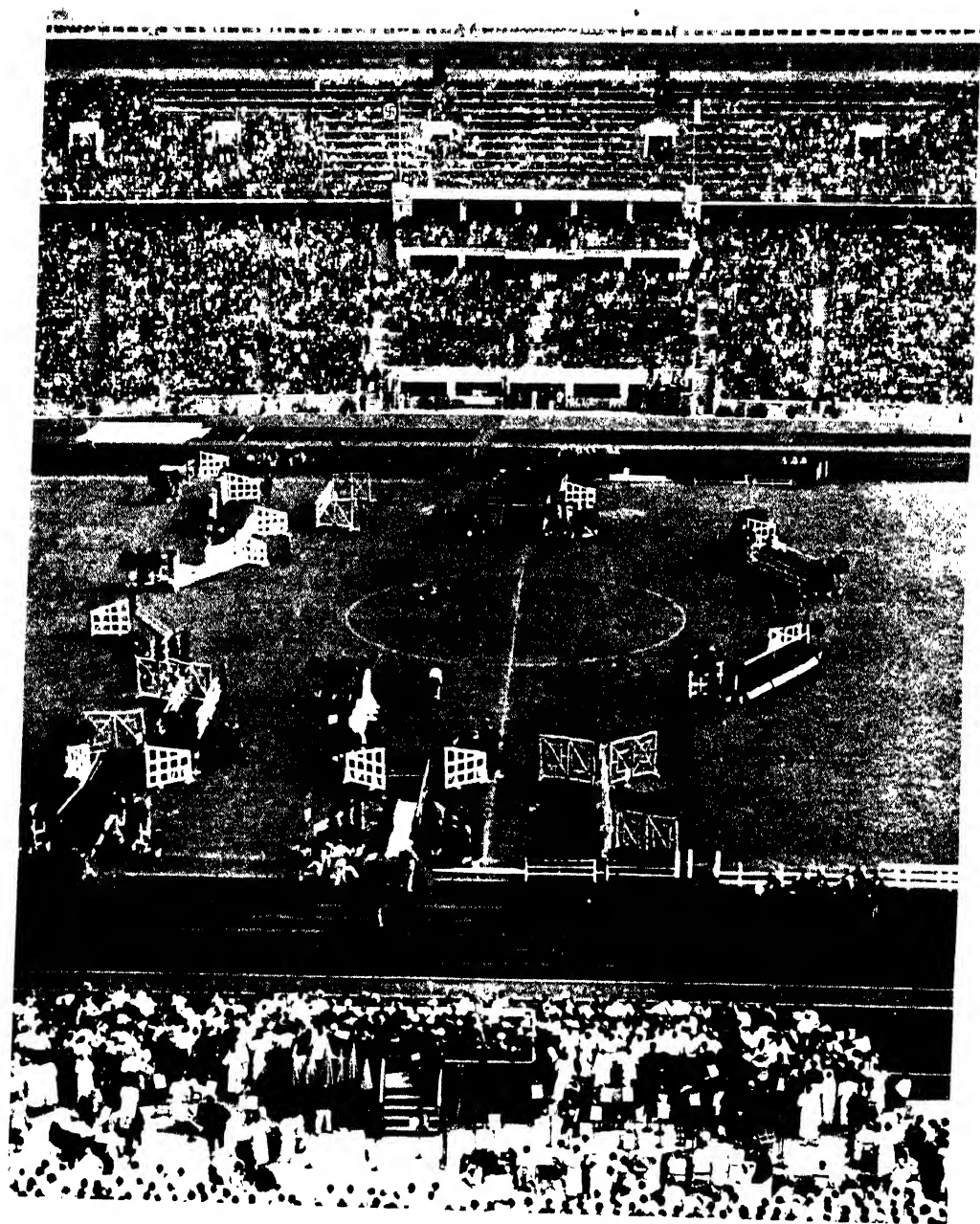
THE GRAND NATIONAL

'I have been given to understand that the English have recently given up communicating with each other by fires in the hills and are now using, many of them, the telephone. Under the circumstances it seems amazing to me that they still continue to ride an anachronistic seat over the Grand National fences.

Judging from the pictures, some 90% of the horses get over the Grand National fences not thanks to their riders but despite them. And don't tell me now that the camera lies; I have heard many an Englishman explain that, but I'll bet it would be hard to convince the horses.'

The sarcasm is perhaps permissible as the writer is evidently very keen on his subject, but the fact remains that our cross-country riders, whether hunting or steeplechasing, have not adopted the forward seat.

In considering the seat when leaping, Show-jumping can be ignored as it is only an adjunct to agricultural shows for the purpose of providing a spectacle to bring in gate-money. It has no practical value. To quote an eminent authority: 'In the hunting fields when hounds are running, you may meet every conceivable type of fence, with the exception of those known as the "Obstacles of the Show Ring".' Out hunting there are two schools. There are a few riders who, while sitting back, lean forward for the whole of the leap; and others who keep their bodies as nearly as possible perpendicular to the ground. A man must decide for himself which best suits his style of riding. If he will look round he



A SPECIMEN OF A SHOW-JUMPING COURSE
(At the Olympic Games, Prix des Nations)

Actually this labyrinthian course was entitled 'Das Jagdspringen' (Hunt Jumping)

will find some brilliant performer in the hunting field, of similar weight and build, and who rides the same kind of horse as he does himself. He can take him as pattern and copy him as well as he can until such time as he has had experience.

If there is anything in favour of the forward seat, the advantage is confined to show-jumping where it is almost universally adopted, but here we have to remember that each obstacle is a known quantity to man and horse, the take-off and the landing are perfect, and there is no chance of a fall through failing to clear a jump. There are none of the



Neither horse nor rider would have had much chance of recovering if the forward seat had been adopted.

uncertainties, emergencies and complications of the hunting field, for which I maintain the forward seat is unsuited.

Men who ride show-jumpers and who also hunt, like Mr. Tom Taylor, use both seats, but relegate each kind to its proper sphere. One never sees the show-jumping seat out hunting and rarely the hunting seat in the show ring, although a notable exception was Mr. Foster when he used to ride his jumpers himself.

There is a mechanical explanation of this. When a train stops we have to lean back to counteract the application of the brakes; if it starts with a jerk we must lean forward. And so it is in jumping. We must lean forward as the horse takes off, to counteract the shock of propulsion, and we must lean back as he lands, to counteract the shock of landing.

The objections to this forward seat are:

(1) The weight of the rider is placed forward, the idea being that this frees the loins from weight, but surely it is more important to free the fore end. The centre of gravity of the man should, as far as possible, be in line with the centre of gravity of the horse. The advantage of a sloping shoulder is to put the saddle and the weight of the rider back, but if he places himself forward, he nullifies the advantage of the sloping shoulder, and when landing it is just the time when the forehand is already over-burdened with the weight of horse and rider and the force of propulsion.

(2) The shock of landing over a jump tends to put the rider forward, he is obliged to steady himself by the horse's neck, which cannot be called good riding.

(3) If the horse pecks or stumbles, the man who is sitting forward is half off his horse already, and a peck is almost certain to complete the catastrophe. If he is sitting back and leaning back and the horse pecks on landing, the rider's impetus *may* cause him to bring his body forward till he is leaning forward, but by this time it so often happens that the horse has recovered himself and has regained his feet.

(4) A horse that has pecked with a rider who is sitting forward and leaning forward has most of the weight on the withers and neck, and is considerably hampered when he tries to heave himself on to his feet again, and the rider may get a heavy blow in the face from his horse's neck.

On landing, the weight of the rider is thrust forward in the direction of the thigh on to the knees, there is practically none on the seat, and the horse's loins are quite free. The worst that can happen in case of a stumble is that the rider is forced into the position of the forward seat and thereby hampers the horse in recovering. It is significant that nearly all huntsmen, whippers-in and other hunt servants are never seen riding over jumps with the forward seat. One exception that I can call to mind was a whipper-in to a southern pack *who broke down every horse he rode* and lost his job in consequence.

A firm seat independent of the reins is the keynote of good riding and much depends on a man's make and shape whether this is quickly acquired or whether much drudgery is entailed. If a rider has short legs and heavy shoulders, the centre of gravity is high, and balance if once lost is difficult to regain and the leg grip has to be strong to force the displaced weight back into the perpendicular. If, on the contrary, his legs are long and his shoulders light, simple gravity gives him a more secure position at the outset.

There are two important points to bear in mind for security in jumping. If the rider lands with his feet thrust forward and his knees



The outcome of landing with the
straight knee

straight he will be shot out of the saddle, and unless he is lucky he will get a fall. If in addition he does not keep his hands down a fall is practically certain. The stiff knee causes the stirrup leather to act as a catapult and the lifting of the hands and arms raises the centre of gravity with accompanying difficulty of balance. The bent knee with the hands low is more than half way to security in jumping.

It fell to my lot during the war to have through my hands a great number of recruit drivers and officers. While many of them seemed to fall naturally into an easy and firm seat owing to their suitable build I doubt whether any of those who had not ridden before would become horsemen. Some of the boys from public schools, who had ridden all their lives, shaped well *when once they could be made to realise that they did not know everything about riding*. However, they had a bad time of it, because they were not popular with either the instructors or their fellows, as they were rather given to being contemptuous of the rule-of-thumb methods of the former and the early efforts of the latter. When the class was ready for passing out, the beginners and those of longer experience were, to the casual observer, a wonderfully even lot, but a practised eye could separate them without difficulty.

People who take to horses for the first time when they are grown up, say eighteen and upwards, may acquire a good seat even though the other essentials for fine horsemanship escape them, but by a merciful dispensation of providence they never know what they have missed, or, indeed, that they have missed anything.

CHAPTER IV

A GOOD MOUTH

The consideration of a good mouth follows naturally the preceding chapters. For a horse's mouth to be good it must in the first place be so sensitive that a rider can stop him smoothly and easily at whatever pace he may be going. The rider must also be able to guide him at all paces accurately and with equal facility either to the right or left (always in conjunction with leg pressure).

This definition, however, must be qualified to a certain extent. It often happens when hunting with the trusty, experienced hunter that once he is committed to a fence he will stiffen his jaw and his neck, take a firm hold, and then you feel that nothing will stop him. This cannot be called a bad mouth, as many riders like thus to have their minds made up for them. Similarly a hunter that seems difficult to stop or steady galloping across a field with hounds running is simply displaying keenness and a desire to be with hounds. It will be found that he will stop quite temperately when the real necessity comes, such as at a crowded gateway, to queue up at a gap or at a check. Both these characteristics are not unfavourable attributes of the true hunter temperament.

The bit, combined with good legs and hands, in order to be suitable, must never hamper a horse's movements or adversely affect his action otherwise that condition known as 'bridle lameness' will be the result.

A good seat with good hands and legs are essentials in producing a good mouth and without them a horse's mouth is quickly spoiled. Conversely, with a pulling horse a man's hands soon lose their sensitiveness, often, it is true, only temporarily, but to ride hard-mouthed horses regularly will ruin any man's hands in time. In fact, even a few minutes on a determined puller are enough to render a man hardly capable of holding the reins till the muscles of the forearm and wrist have recovered.

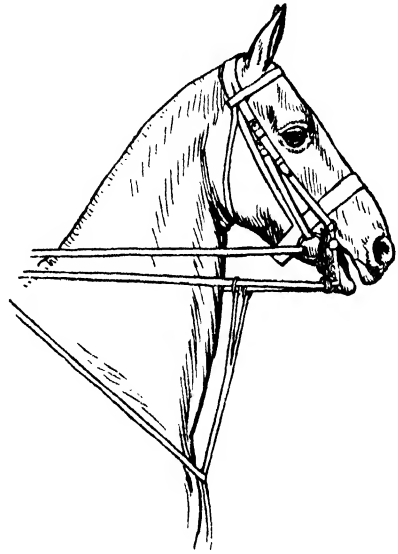
The second essential for a good mouth is that carriage of the horse's head and neck which ensures that the pull on the reins is at right angles to the bars. Then the slight relaxing of the jaw completes the sensitive 'give and take' to the rider's hands.

Should the horse lower his head the pull on the bit comes against the corners of the lips and does not act at all on the bars. If the horse

star-gazes by raising his head and neck then also the action of the bit is on the corners of the lips instead of on the bars. In neither of these instances can the horse have anything but a bad (*i.e.* insensitive) mouth.

There is this to add, however—it is possible to correct the head carriage of some star-gazers, but practically impossible to cure a horse of the faulty carriage known as being 'over-bent'. If, therefore, a rider considers himself horseman enough to tackle the lofty carriage and by a scientific use of hand and leg induce the correct carriage he might risk buying such a horse. But under no circumstances should he saddle himself with a horse that has, through faulty conformation, bad riding, or both, become 'over-bent'.

The correction of the star-gazing position by skilful manipulation of snaffle and curb, aided by the vigorous use of the leg, is greatly assisted by a carefully adjusted martingale, whereas there is no strap, bit or contrivance that can cure the over-bent horse, although the bearing rein will prevent a horse from becoming so. But for some reason this strap is never used in riding although horsemen have no objection to a martingale, either 'running' or 'standing', to correct one form of faulty carriage.¹



A well-shaped head well carried, with bit, bridoon, curb-chain, and martingale correctly fitted and adjusted.

correct one form of faulty carriage.¹

There is this difference between the two kinds of martingale. A standing martingale *holds* a horse's head and neck in such a position that the reins must pull at right angles to the bars of the mouth. A running martingale simply ensures that even if a horse carries his head too high—star-gazes—the pull nevertheless tends to be in the right direction. It may therefore be said that the former *corrects* the carriage of the horse's head and the latter *compensates* to a certain extent for the faulty carriage.

TONGUE OVER THE BIT OR CURLING UP THE TONGUE

These exasperating tricks are further causes of bad mouth and until a horse can be induced to put his tongue back to the correct position under the bit there is often no mouth at all, as it is impossible to

¹Nevertheless, I have played polo on ponies in bearing reins that would be unplayable otherwise.

predict what effect, if any, the bit will have. A pull may cause a horse to rear in pain, and on the other hand the mouth may be found to be dead, with no control whatever. It is difficult to say what causes a horse to contract the habit but I think it must be put down to an attempt to avoid discomfort of some sort. This makes it doubly important to examine regularly the tongue and the bars of the mouth during breaking, as there is no cure for tongue over the bit when once the habit is established, and none of the preventative measures—tongue bits and tying the tongue—are entirely satisfactory.

Hanging the tongue out of the mouth and opening the jaw wide *may* be counteracted by a low noseband but these are both bad faults, especially the latter.

THE JAW

If a horse sets or crosses his jaw he must be induced to relax by gentle manipulation of the curb bit (always in conjunction with the legs to insure that free forward movement is not lost). This is nothing more or less than an essential part of the process known by various names—'nagging', 'collecting', 'balancing', 'bridling' or 'mouthing'. Actually it is just one of the many items of the complete 'direct flexion'.

Even if a horse 'cracks nuts' he is not mouthing correctly, because he has not relinquished the command of his jaw. Similarly a horse that froths at the mouth is doing something that he should not with his lips, cheeks or tongue or with all three.

A good mouth should nevertheless remain moist (without frothing), which it will if the muscular action of the jaw, lips and tongue are not used protectively. If a mouth goes dry it will also lose its sensitiveness. This is again a sign that there is something wrong with a rider's hands, with the bit, or with the horse's breaking. The 'keys' on the breaking snaffle are to induce the young horse to 'mouth'—to keep up certain play between his jaw, the bars of his mouth and the bit. This induces salivation and prevents the mouth becoming dry.

So we see that for a mouth to be good, the direct flexion must be complete and the bit must suit both horse and rider.

To obtain the direct flexion the horse's conformation must be such that he is *physically capable of assuming it* and the rider must be a horseman advanced enough to teach it to a horse and to *prevent him from losing it*.¹

A HARD MOUTH

If a rider finds that a horse requires a pull at the reins in excess of his strength he must not condemn the mouth as hard till he has tried

¹See also *Bridle Wise* by the same author.

a variety of bits, but if the mouth remains hard in spite of these changes he must assume that for some reason the mouth has become insensitive.

GETTING BEHIND THE BIT

A bad fault, partly of mouth and partly of temperament, it is often attributable to both. If too severe a bit is used in breaking, a horse, being afraid to face it, may, to avoid its pressure, bend his neck, relax his jaw and thereby slacken the reins. Thus the communication between the horse's mouth and the rider's hand is cut and the horse is for the time being master of the situation. Having found this out he may thereafter deliberately get behind the bit as a defence. It is, of course, something quite different from going with a very light rein. The cure for 'behind the bit' is energetic use of the legs combined with a change of bit to something a horse will face.

CHAPTER V

HARMONY FROM CO-ORDINATION

The result of co-ordinating all the aids, combined with a good seat, is the harmony between mount and man which must exist for true horsemanship.

In considering this subject, one must be guided not only by personal experience and observation, but by the experience and observation of such experts as trainers, horse dealers, breakers, and riding masters, who are so vitally interested that their opinions are the most valuable that can have any bearing on the subject.

Trainers of steeplechasers have to see that their lads do not balk their horses while schooling or at all events that their quickness in getting away after landing is not impaired. Horse dealers have often to re-school their horses after trial by a customer, and schoolers of polo ponies have so often to face the distressing experience that their perfectly trained ponies have begun to shy off the ball in the hands of their new owners, while riding masters have the causes of the evil constantly before their eyes.

I have, therefore, been at some pains to corroborate my own views by exhaustive enquiry amongst these experts, and the result is that we must come to the conclusion that falls, refusals, shying off the ball, etc., all have the same origin. A want of co-ordination of effort on the part of the rider, resulting in a spasmodic clutch of the hand on the rein and of the legs against the horse's side has been misunderstood and has induced a misdirected effort on the part of the horse which has in its turn resulted in a major or minor disaster.

Even if a horse should slip or stumble we must in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred use no aid at all. An appropriate shifting of the rider's weight may sometimes help, but the horse will not *want* to fall and it is usually best to leave the method of recovery to him. If in the hundredth instance the rider feels that he can actively help the situation, he must resist the instinctive clutch at the reins but apply all the aids, letting the circumstance decide whether the hands or the legs predominate.

The main difficulty of the riding teacher is to give his pupil the instruction and practice which will help him to overcome in the first place the instinctive misuse of the hands and arms in moments of diffi-



Harmony and the want of it .

culty, and in the second place to avoid an instinctive involuntary grip of that part of the leg below the knee. In this respect riding is no different from other arts and from all outdoor games.

Whatever aptitude the student may possess, expert instruction and supervised practice are of paramount importance. There is no doubt that we grip with the hand and use the biceps instinctively in all moments of stress and danger. Even a newly-born infant will do so if he feels himself in danger of falling. Biologists tell us that this is an atavistic trait which goes back to the pre-historic days when we lived in trees. It often takes riders years to overcome this instinct, some never do. It is, moreover, a fault not unknown to motor drivers. How many, in moments of emergency, instinctively and convulsively stamp on everything within reach and how few adopt the procedure appropriate to the occasion? A swerve, or even acceleration will often extricate him from impending danger which the application of the brake would only precipitate.

FALLS AND REFUSALS

If one watches the field come over a fence one cannot help noticing that the majority of riders, both astride and aside, interfere with their horses' mouths at some period of the leap. Even if there is not definite interference at that particular fence, there are signs of apprehension in the horse's bearing and expression which point to previous interference. If my readers wish for corroboration let them select a place where the field has to collect and wait their turn to take the one jumpable place in single file. They will see very few whose poise and balance are just right, and many who definitely interfere with their horses in some way or other. That nervous clutch with hand or leg (or both) will be noticeable.

The leg clutch (and by leg is meant that part of the leg from the knee to the foot) is no doubt often induced by an instinctive effort to correct an insecure seat. But although it may not be so mischievous as the hand clutch, nevertheless it ought to be overcome, for one can see that even if the hand does not interfere, an involuntary leg application may cause a refusal or a fall. While leg pressure will often help to hearten and keep straight a wavering horse, a willing animal with no thought in his mind of refusing or swerving, may be thrown out of his stride or may be induced to make some misdirected effort.

The hand is, however, a more fruitful cause of grief. As the horse takes off, the inexperienced rider instinctively makes the muscular leg effort and for want of co-ordination of his muscles, the hands and arms also take part in this convulsive spasm. The result is always disastrous, not

necessarily at any particular fence, but the fear of interference will destroy a horse's freedom and cramp his style; often it will make him crash into his fence or cause him to drop his hind legs into a ditch.

SHYING OFF THE BALL

Here again want of co-ordination resulting in a nervous clutch is entirely responsible for a pony contracting the habit. Strange to say, experience shows us that a pony will be very forgiving of an accidental blow with a polo stick. Indeed I have known an inquisitive young pony, whose attention has been distracted, get his head in the way of the stick, even in an early lesson, without being affected in any way by an accidental blow. It is, moreover, strange how quickly ponies learn to differentiate between the polo stick and a riding whip. It is the involuntary interference with his mouth and with his sides that is evil.

One would not, of course, begin to train a pony to stick and ball until he had become bridle-wise and sensitive to the leg aids, but while this will make the pony responsive and therefore easy to keep moving at the right pace and distance from the ball, it will only be for as long as the aids are used correctly and co-ordinately, but it must be realised that the effect of training is to make the pony equally susceptible to *unintentional* and *misapplied* indications.

In common with all departments of a horse's progressive education no hard and fast rule can be laid down as to when this schooling to stick and ball should begin. With a pony of placid, confiding disposition almost any time will do; with a nervous, highly-strung pony an earlier start is indicated, some time before he is fit and before he is too sensitive to the aids. If a rough rule for general application is wanted we should aim at long, slow lessons in stick and ball interspersed with short sharp spells of 'foot work' and stopping and turning.

All this calls for skill in two directions. Not only have we to eradicate a habit contracted by the horse or pony, but we have also to improve our own horsemanship with a view to preventing refusing or shying.

The tragedy is that if a hunter has got into the way of refusing, or if a polo pony has begun to shy off the ball, the rider in whose hands the animal has contracted these habits will not be able to effect a cure until he so refines his aids as to avoid the causes which induced the habit. Consciously or unconsciously he will have interfered with his horse's mouth at some critical moment either during the leap or in the swing of the polo stick.

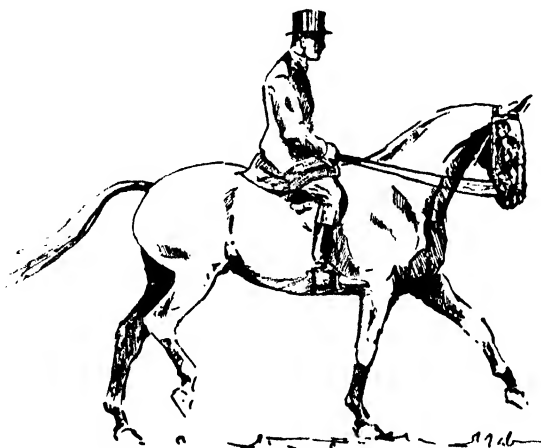
With a hunter, a milder bit may be tried but it will usually be found necessary to employ an expert to take the horse in hand, some lightweight with a firm seat who can ride him over fences without inter-



Polo demands co-ordination of hand and leg.

fering with the reins. In the hands of this expert, a horse comes to realise that his mouth is going to be left alone so that he regains confidence and will again jump freely.

With the polo pony I repeat that ball shyness is due either to interference with the pony's mouth with the bridle hand while in the act of swinging the right arm or to an unintended leg indication. The co-ordinate use of the aids is essential in all riding, but in hitting the polo ball a further co-ordination is called for. The player's right arm must swing and complete the stroke quite independently of the left arm which holds the reins and which is guiding the pony, and the rider must be careful only to use his legs to keep the pony's hind part straight and to urge him forward. When the rider can make a full stroke without his aids taking any part in the movement, except in so far as is necessary to keep him straight, he will be able to cure a pony that has become ball shy; but it is useless to attempt it otherwise. He will, as with a refuser, have to turn the pony over to some better rider than himself for him to take in hand and effect a cure. (From *Bridle Wise*.)



'Dressage', leg and hand in unison.

The beginner may well ask what he can do to be saved, and how he can overcome his disability. The only way is to go to school under a capable instructor, who will keep him well placed throughout a course of lessons. This expert tuition and supervised practice will do wonders for the men and women who find that they are getting more than their share of falls, whose horses tend to lose their smoothness in jumping or become refusers, and whose ponies are shying off or opening out at the ball. During these lessons hand and leg will come to take part conjointly and co-ordinately in every indication the rider gives his horse, until he has acquired the new habit of acting contrary to instinct.

CHAPTER VI

BIT, WHIP AND SPUR

No research more repays the horseman than in the selection of a suitable bit, and no greater cause for misunderstanding exists than with a wrongly bitted horse or with one in dread of an injudiciously used spur.

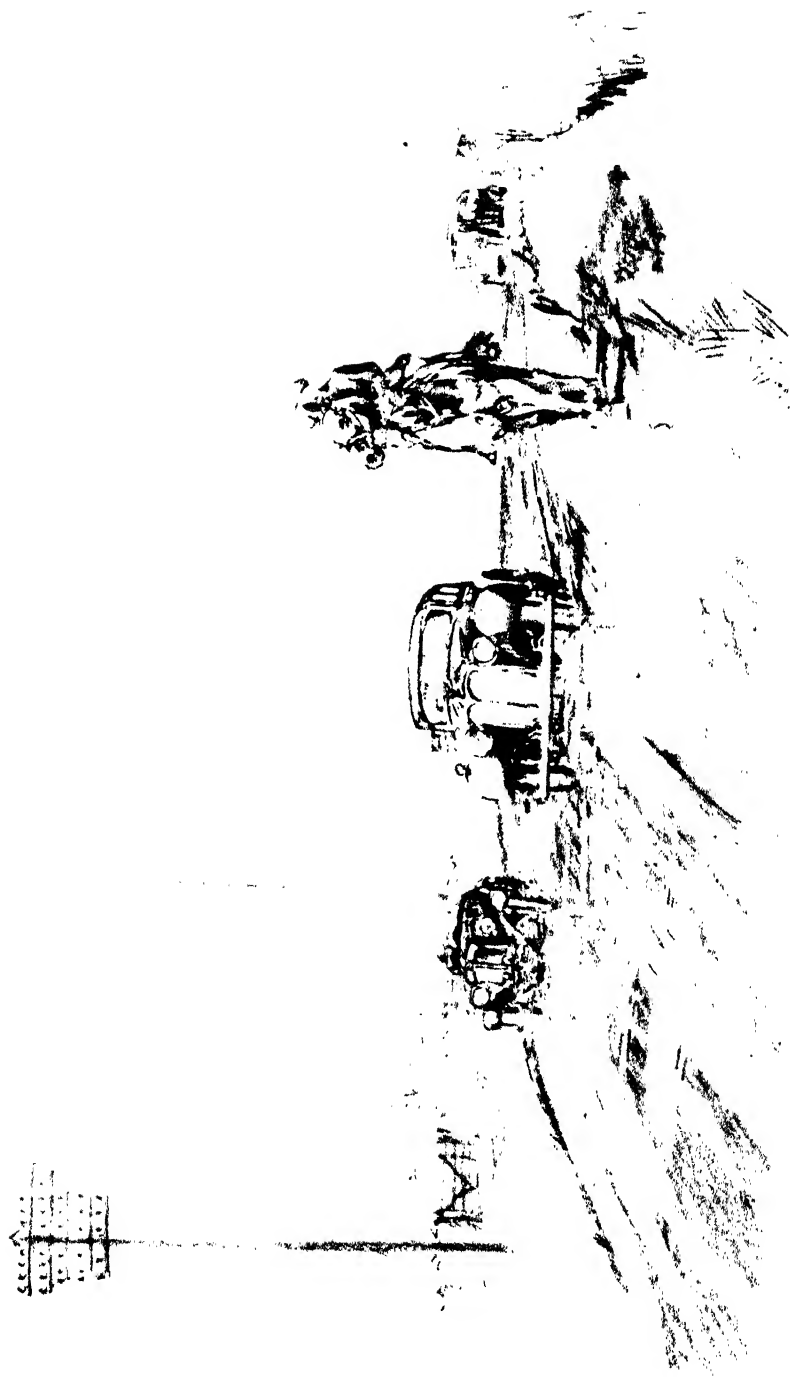
Even an unbroken horse will fly instinctively if struck by a whip or from the threat of one, but the bit and spur are means of communication which the horse has to *learn* to interpret. They must never be considered instruments of force, the rider using them to convey an impression to the horse's mind, which in turn passes on the instruction thus conveyed to his limbs. Because of the fear in which a horse holds the whip it should only be used educatively and as a reminder, but as the horse's response to it is instinctive, the resulting movements are reflex rather than the outcome of the training which spur and bit demand.

The bit, whip and spur should be considered together for reasons which, if not immediately apparent, will become obvious in due course.

We can take the following as a rough guide to the progressive use of the leg aids. We pass from whip to heel, thence, via dummy spurs to those with blunted rowels. After this the process is to a certain extent, and with possible omissions, reversed. We should, as a matter of fact, be able to return, especially with a well-bred horse, straight to leg pressure, with the whip ever present to be used on occasions as a reminder until mobility of the hind part is attained.

As it is impossible to predict what effect a bit will have, it is impossible to theorise or to give definite advice on the choice of one. It is easy to decide that a certain bit does not suit a horse, but only a trial will enable us to select one that will. To be successful in this direction one must not hesitate to try and improve a horse's going by making *some* change—however insignificant it may appear. How often am I asked in what bit I think a horse should go! My answer is always the same. After asking in what bit he has been ridden I then suggest that a substitute should be tried.

The study of the mechanism of various bits, their action and fit, amply repays the man who aims at comfort for himself and his horse.



A horse's education is never at an end

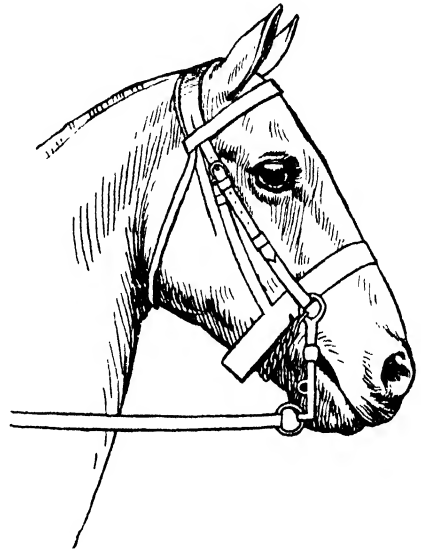
Because of the difficulty enunciated at the beginning of this chapter, it is impossible to write positively on the subject, but it is nevertheless possible to enumerate a few maxims, a few 'do's' and 'don'ts'.

One often hears it stated that there is a 'key' to every horse's mouth. This needs to be qualified. There *is* a bit which is the most suitable for any given mouth, but *which that bit is must be considered in relation to each individual rider*, and can only be discovered by experiment and not by theory. But there is no bit or other contrivance that will take the place of the step by step breaking which is absolutely essential with every horse.

It is possible, but by no means certain, that once having found the bit most comfortable to both mount and man, this will be the best in all circumstances.

When trying various bits a difficulty presents itself. The trial must be made at the particular job for which the horse is intended. We cannot for instance be sure of finding out when hacking the correct bit for a horse out hunting, or of discovering at practice, one suitable for a polo pony in a game. Again, we might conceivably have to ride a horse in a different bit for a Point-to-Point from that in which we should hunt him. A pony might go kindly in a slow club game of polo in a certain bit and get quite out of hand towards the end of a fast chukker in a match. This often makes the selection of the correct bit a lengthy business; it may well take half a season.

Then there is the educative value of a bit to be considered. During a horse's education (and who shall say when it stops) a particular bit may be necessary for a few lessons to bring home and to emphasize a certain point. For instance, it may be advantageous to put a snaffle on to a hunter that has been made 'sticky' at his fences through being inexpertly ridden in a double bridle.¹ The object of this would be to restore his confidence and help to make him forget the more serious interfer-



A coarse head with a badly fitted and badly proportioned bit causing the curb chain to press on the jaw above the chin groove and the corners of the lips to wrinkle. (The snaffle head has been omitted for the sake of clarity.)

¹The curb rein of a double bridle or Pelham must always be loose while a horse jumps. No horse will 'keep his mouth' or continue to jump freely if his rider maintains even the slightest pull on the curb during the leap.

ence with his mouth at the critical moment of taking off. A horse might have to be hunted a few times in a severe bridle to get him out of the way of rushing his fences. A polo pony often has to be played for a time in something that will bring him back on to his hocks to stop him after he has contracted the habit of 'running on'.

The further consideration of biting depends on two other things. Not only must the horse be correctly broken, *i.e.* taught the direct flexion and obedience to the aids, but the rider also must have been taught to use hand and leg correctly.

To get the best result a bit must fit the horse. It must be the correct width between the cheeks, neither too wide nor too narrow, and the length of the cheek above the mouth should be such that when the mouth of the bit rests on the bars the curb chain lies in the chin groove. This will necessitate several sizes of bit if the stud is large, or if it is a constantly changing one.

The following points are worth considering in selecting a bit. Never put two bits into a horse's mouth if he carries himself and goes pleasantly with one. I am aware that this is a plea for the snaffle or one of the varieties of Pelham bit, and I am also aware that this will meet with the disapprobation of many hunting men. Nevertheless, I give the advice deliberately as the result of a wide experience and exhaustive experiments carefully recorded.

Bits may be roughly sub-divided and graded as follows:

<i>Mild:</i>	Half-moon snaffle	}	The thicker they are in the mouth the milder.
	Plain-jointed snaffle		
	Twisted „ „		
	Ported snaffle		
<i>More Severe:</i>	Snaffle-mouth Pelham	}	The longer the cheek, the tighter the curb chain, and the higher the port the more severe the bit.
	Sefton „		
	Half-moon „		
	Straight-bar „		
	Ported „		
	Hanoverian „		

All bits which have an unbroken bar can have the mouth covered in vulcanite, which makes them less severe. A leather curb is less severe than a chain.

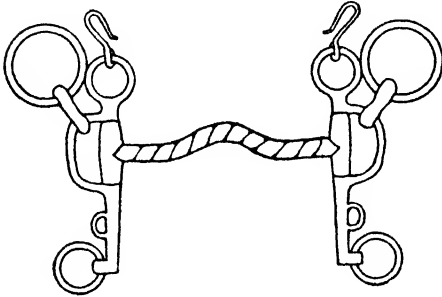
The mouths of Pelham bits can, moreover, be made fast or to slide on the cheek, and this again causes a variation in the effect, but here one cannot predict which will be the more and which the less severe, and also they can be smooth or rough.

In this list I have omitted the various forms of Weymouth (curb and snaffle combination) bridle. Their name is legion, and there are besides countless varieties without names. But whatever the bit there

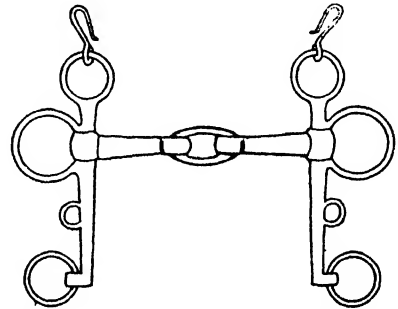
should be an egg-butt joint at the cheek to obviate the risk of the corners of the lips being pinched—an annoying accident often necessitating a horse being thrown out of work.

It should be an invariable rule to ride a horse or a pony in the mildest bit that gives us control. But here again there is a pitfall. An apparently mild bit that requires a strong pull is not so effective, or indeed

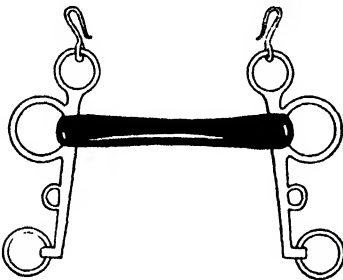
Four bits seldom found in the modern saddle-room but often useful.



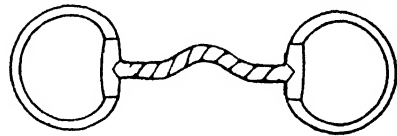
Ported Pelham (the reverse side of the mouth is smooth).



Snaffle-mouth Pelham (the Sefton).
The joints should preferably be egg-butt.



Pelham with flexible vulcanite mouth.



Ported snaffle (the reverse side of the mouth is smooth).

so humane, as one more severe that requires a light pull. It is the power of conveying an impression that must be considered—the effect on the mind. A sharp incisive word of command is easier for the trained soldier or even a recruit to obey with precision than either a bellow or a mild conversational tone of voice. This analogy is worth bearing in mind when considering this particular aspect of the selection of a suitable bit.

The firmer and more independent of the reins a man's seat the more severe can be the bit, without the danger of destroying a horse's freedom of forward movement.

The evil effects of too severe a bit are:

Too much weight on the hind part (rearing).
The destruction of free forward movement.
Stickiness in jumping.
Slowness in jumping off in a polo pony.
Shortening of the stride.

The evil effects of too mild a bit are:

Too much weight on the fore hand.
Hind legs left behind.
Loss of balance in preparing to jump.
Failure to stop on the hocks in a polo pony.
Fatigue for the rider, and the consequent eventual loss of all finesse in handling a horse.
Gradual numbness of a horse's mouth.

From this it will be seen how immensely important it is to select the happy medium, the correct bit for both horse and rider.

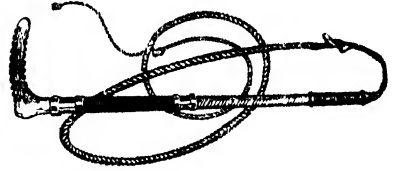
The whip should be looked upon as far as possible as a subsidiary aid. A 'green' horse is afraid of the whip from the beginning and will run away from it (in fact he has to be trained not to be afraid of it or of a sword, lance or polo stick), whereas the spur is simply an irritation until the horse has been taught to interpret its meaning. With just a few horses the whip continues to be the more effective of the two. Why then, it may be asked, use a spur at all, why not rely entirely on a whip? The reason is that a whip can only be used on one side at a time, and raising it preparatory to hitting a horse may be interpreted as a threat and cause him to swerve, and as one hand must be taken off the reins it will be seen that the rider is not in such a good position. If we approach the question from the standpoint of true horsemanship there is no doubt that we must at the earliest moment cease to use the whip and rely entirely on the leg and spur. Then and then only can a rider control both sides of a horse's mouth and at the same time control its hind part. This is essential for correct schooling. There will be many instances where the whip has appeared more effective than the spur in urging a horse forward, but with a well-bred horse or pony the mere presence of a whip in the rider's hand is enough. Later, of course, when the horse is broken, the reins can be held in the left hand, leaving the right hand free. A horse also notices whether a rider has a spur on or not, even before he is touched with it.

Convention governs the kinds of whip in general use. The variety latterly known as the 'crop' is generally seen out hunting, and nowadays fashion decrees that it shall be no longer than eighteen inches,

and, as if this were not sufficiently inconvenient, it is encumbered with five or six feet of useless complicating thong, and then about six inches of curved buckhorn handle to risk the rider being pulled off his horse at an awkward gate.

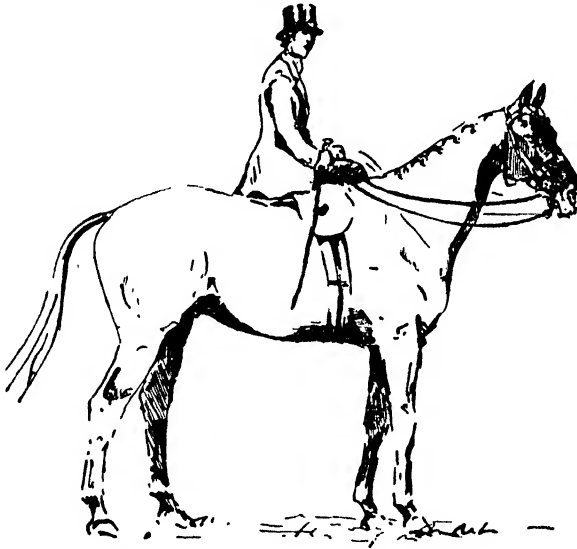


An old-fashioned but practical whip.



The modern fashionable short whip.

The fashion for the short crop and long-hooked handle has been introduced within my recollection; why, I have no idea. I think the length of the hunting crop should be twenty-seven inches and the thong, if a rider feels he cannot defy convention and do without one,



The whip long enough to take the place of the right leg, heel and spur.

should not be longer than forty-two inches. The buckhorn handle should not be longer than three inches over all, and it should have a four-pronged gate stop at the end. If my readers will try opening, shutting and holding open a gate with a whip of these dimensions I venture to predict they will never again be satisfied with anything else. As far as my enquiries have gone, huntsmen and whippers-in invariably pre-

fer the long kind because of the greater ease with which they can manipulate a gate, especially from an impatient, restless horse.

A woman, riding side-saddle, should never use this kind of whip either short or long. The variety unpleasantly known as the 'cutting whip' is the only kind that should ever be seen with a side-saddle, and preferably it should be long enough to touch a horse just behind the girth on the off-side, when the right hand is still on the rein. It should have a three-inch buckhorn handle and a gate stop like the crop, and the first twenty-four inches should be stiff enough to open a gate and prevent it swinging shut, often no easy matter, especially in a wind.¹

To what extent can the spur and whip be applied effectively to induce a refusing horse to jump? The question is propounded because it is here that one sees both used so freely. Here again, if the horse has been systematically and progressively taught to move forward from the spur or on leg pressure, the rider will be in a better position to deal with the situation if he has both hands on the reins. To use a whip in this difficult circumstance demands skill or its application will be untimely; even given this skill it is doubtful if it is more effective.

A rider with short legs will find it impossible to use spurs effectively or to avoid using them unintentionally. Such riders will of course have to rely on a whip.

There is no part of horsemanship more universally misunderstood than the spur. It is almost safe to predict that if the question is asked, 'What is the use of the spur in riding?' the answer will be wrong, even from men and women of experience.

The spur is used to assist the leg or heel in controlling and guiding the horse's hind part, and for no other purpose. It will be best to deal first with the main fallacy.

It is thought by many that a horse can be made to gallop faster by indiscriminate spurring, but all that can be done in this direction is to induce him, always in conjunction with the use of the hands and by correct timing, to get his hind legs further under him and thereby balance him and place him in a better position for an effort.² It is, therefore, imperative always to use the leg or spur in combination with the rein and bit, which have to raise the head and neck and thus complete the balance. The balance and action of the horse can thus be improved, and to this extent the pace increased. The correct timing of the spur or of leg pressure is not easily explained. The rider must *feel* when

¹There is, however, little hope of persuading most women riding side-saddle to use a cutting whip out hunting, they seem to think it is a reflection on their horse and on their riding.

²This fact must have been long since recognised by racing men as jockeys' heels are nowhere near any place where spurring could have any effect.

the hind legs are coming off the ground, and then by squeezing the legs or by applying the heel or spur, he will stimulate the horse to increase his stride and strike back with increased vigour.

The very morning I re-phrased the above lines I saw my daughter riding a hunter that she had been preparing for a local show. It had been schooled in a universal bit (ported Pelham with short elbow cheek), but knowing the average hunting man's prejudice she was getting it used to a curb and snaffle. I was not at all satisfied with its way of going, so I advised her to put on spurs. There was an improvement, but the horse still galloped with too much weight on the fore hand. We again put on the army G.S. bit and the effect of this *now* in conjunction with the spur was magical, but I still thought some improvement could be made, so we substituted a vulcanite half-moon Pelham and got a further marked improvement.

There is no theory to explain this sequence of experiments and no logic in it either, and it is not a peculiar instance, but it stresses the importance of minute changes in bits, curb chains, martingales and spurs, separately and in combination.

To show how far the misconception of the use of the spur can go I quote from an article by a professed horseman, entitled, 'Why Wear Spurs?' The question itself was a curious one for a horseman to ask, and it was difficult to gather for whose benefit the article was written, as the points discussed were so elementary as to savour more of the comic papers than to be the result of observation and experience. The writer refers to the spur as 'useful to hang on by', and talks of spur marks in the horse's 'flanks'. He speaks of the spur as the 'emblem of horsemanship', 'pride of the habitué', and 'the envy of the aspiring rider'. The author went on to describe it as a special mark of 'dignity and veneration, and the resort of the person who wishes to make himself important', and if they were made of gold, he says, no one could gaze upon them without reverence or admiration. For the civilian to wear them denotes experience and courage, although at the same time their use is an indication of a lack of co-operation between mount and man. He further described the spur as the 'S.O.S. of the cavalry-man'. He told us that the spur 'is an apology for bad riding and bad schooling, an annoyance to the horse, the admiration of children and housemaids, and for the swashbuckler to flaunt'.

It is difficult to comment temperately, but as the question was asked one must assume it was asked in all seriousness, and as such misconceptions can exist it is important to dispel them.

A rider's boot may be considered incomplete without spurs, and furthermore he may dread being considered too inexperienced to avoid their use at inappropriate times. This is, I think, the reason why men in the

Service like to wear them on foot if they are entitled to do so, for does not their presence argue that they have acquired a great art?

There is also apparent confusion between the *wearing* of the spur and the *use* of the spur. If the author quoted asks why should people wear spurs, and then goes on to describe their misuses and to say nothing about their uses, he is asking one question and answering another. Spurs are *worn* for ornament or as a badge or symbol, and are *used* because without them a horse or pony cannot be broken or schooled. This does not mean that it is always necessary to wear them on horseback, but without a spur wherewith to emphasize and give meaning to leg pressure, schooling would be a protracted and wearisome business, if not impossible.

To say that the use of spurs is cruel is just one more refuge of the sentimental and unpractical, for *someone* has to use spurs at *some time* during a horse's education, or the response to leg and heel pressure is at the best only half-hearted and conditional. But to say that to wear them dismounted is swank, and that the use of them mounted serves no useful purpose and that a rider is better without them, is raising an element of doubt in the student's mind on a point about which there should be no doubt.

There is no use muddling along without spurs, and the part played by them is positive. Without their use the breaker's time and energy are wasted and quite often the education of the horse comes to a definite standstill.

The spur, the bit and the whip, by emphasizing communication between rider and horse, should be looked upon as means of control and never as instruments of punishment. As a matter of fact we can *never* punish a horse. If there were means at our disposal of explaining to him that the pain we were inflicting was in retribution for some past misdeed it would be effective as punishment, but the intelligence of the horse is not sufficient to connect the two.

When this is fully realised the spur will never be used roughly, or in any way that inflicts unnecessary pain. In this respect it is just the same as the bit. It is brutal and no part of horsemanship to jerk a bit violently in a horse's mouth with the idea of emphasis or in a feeling of annoyance.

The bit is a link to assist the hand to convey certain wishes, viz. to raise the head, to decrease the pace, to guide and control the fore hand. The object of the spur is similar, viz. to assist the leg and heel to place the horse in a better position for exertion and to guide and control the hind part.

The whip serves a dual purpose also. It is at first more effective than the spur to induce forward movement, as it is a threat from which

a horse will naturally defend himself by flight. The whip must therefore be used to prepare a horse to understand the meaning of the leg, heel or spur. If the spur is used without this early preparation the young unbroken horse will, without any doubt, treat it in exactly the same way as the sting of a fly; he will swish his tail, kick at it, and if there is something handy against which to press or brush he will try to rid himself of the annoyance in this way. So if a rider uses a spur on a horse before teaching him its meaning he will simply irritate and make him restive. If he persists he may drive the animal mad and, indeed, permanently and adversely affect his manners and disposition; and it is important to bear in mind that a horse will move away from the whip, no matter to what limb or part of the body it is applied to, whereas the spur is only effective in one spot—three-quarter way down his side and immediately behind the girth.

A rider can, if he likes, try the experiment of riding his horse without spurs, but this is what I describe as 'muddling along'. He will find that until it is trained he will have to kick it very hard in the ribs to get any response whatever, and that it will be quite impossible to obtain that accurate and prompt obedience so necessary if we wish to avoid that abomination—riding by the bridle alone. This hard kicking is undesirable for three reasons: the horse's sides will be bruised; further, he will gain an exaggerated idea of his power of resistance, and also it is tiring to the point of exhaustion to the rider. The hair on a horse is to a certain extent a protection to him, but at the same time I am convinced that it hides many a bruise that would otherwise show 'black and blue'. If, after correct preparation with the whip, the bare heel still fails to obtain a prompt response (as it will with ninety-nine horses out of a hundred) we should try the dummy spur, and it may be that we have to go still further and resort to a spur with blunted rowels.

No horseman would use a severe bit if he could obtain control with a mild one, and there is similarly no sense in using a rowelled spur after free and accurate obedience has been obtained with a dummy or with the bare heel or with leg pressure. If, however, a mild bit required such violent pressure as to cut or bruise a horse's mouth, a rider would be inhuman not to resort to something more severe that requires only a light touch; similarly, a rider should prefer to use a pair of spurs gently than to kick a horse violently in the ribs.

But really sharp spurs should never be used except by the most skilled exponents of the *haute école*, and then only in the confined space of a riding school or manège. The rowels of new spurs as they come from the shops are too sharp for practical riding. They must have the points cut off with a pair of pliers, and be further blunted by rubbing

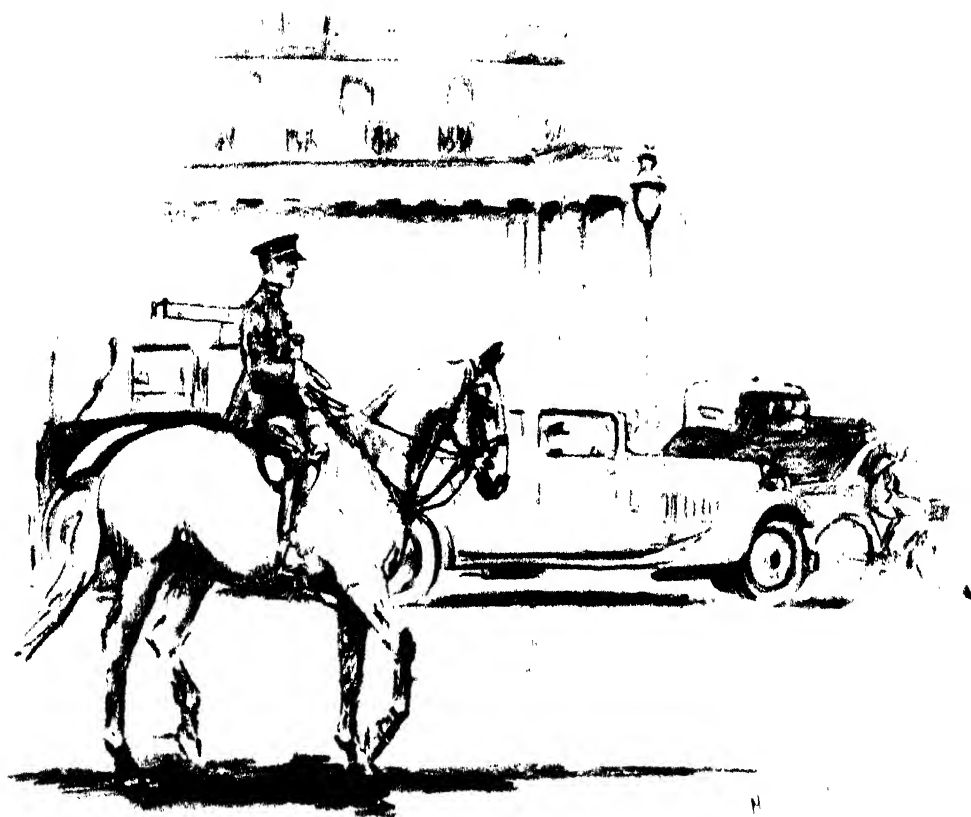
on a stone. It is also necessary to see that the rowels revolve freely, and to ensure this they should be drawn backwards and forwards on a piece of wood after cleaning, and again tested before they are buckled on.

Not only must the use of the spur be understood and its application correctly practised, but, above all things, the rider's seat and balance must be such that he can be certain of not using them unintentionally. There are, as said before, few items of horsemanship where greater want of knowledge is displayed than in the use of the spur, and it is seldom considered as scientifically as it deserves to be. I feel that tradition is to a certain extent to blame for much of the misconception. The spur used to be a symbol of nobility or knighthood; to-day the modern sportsman, evidently under the impression that his costume is incomplete without it, will wear it as a decoration to a top-boot, regardless of the fact that unintentional and incorrect use will adversely affect the manners of his horse.

I remember on one occasion seeing a pony lent for a trial chukker to a hunting-man who was beginning polo. The owner asked him if he would mind removing his spurs as the pony would not play temperately with them. There was quite a little argument, in which the beginner's wife joined, and in the end the trial took place without spurs; the pony was bought, but the new owner, thinking he knew best, ruined the pony in a week by disregarding the previous owner's advice.

Only temperate polo ponies can be ridden in the game with spurs, because here we have not complete control of our actions. In a riding-off bout one's legs are often dragged back and the heels forced against our pony's sides. Dummy spurs and spurs with rowels are of great assistance, in fact essential, in *schooling* a polo pony; but spurs with rowels are not allowed in the game, and, for the reason mentioned above, we should be circumspect in a game whether or not we wear even dummies.

A study of the evolution of the spur leads us to the following conclusions. *Firstly*, as the breed of the saddle horse has improved, viz. the more nearly a horse approaches the impetuous thoroughbred, the less it is necessary to use rowelled spurs, and the gentler can be their application if they are used. *Secondly*, the better the conformation of the horse, viz. the more suitable it is for carrying a saddle, the milder can be the bit, and again, the less severe the spur to control him. For instance, one can understand that a spur, the rowels of which had not had the initial sharpness removed, would require a bit of the utmost severity. *Thirdly*, the better the position in which the horse carries his head the more responsive is he to guidance by the bridle, and his balance is consequently so good that he will be found very responsive to guidance by leg indications. The heavy, coarse horses ridden by our ancestors re-



Our Well-mannered Police horses

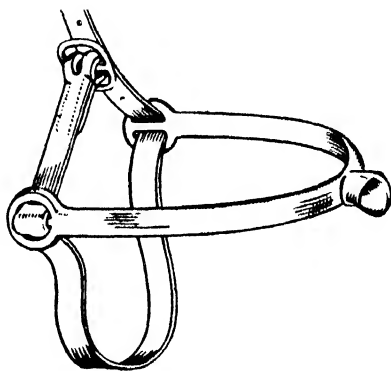
quired bits of great severity and spurs like goads and not instruments of communication, which I maintain both the bit and the spur should be to-day.

It certainly should be possible to hunt the modern saddle horse which has been well schooled in a snaffle, or that very humane double bit, the vulcanite half-moon Pelham, and with dummy spurs. His highly-strung nervous organisation, well-knit frame and thin hide, and instinct for free forward movement, render a spur unnecessary as a goad, and necessary only as a means of control. The lightest application of the rein and leg should be enough to guide him.

The spurs I recommend are those with loop ends. They have the advantage that they can be adjusted to any boot with only one pair of straps, and there is nothing projecting at the sides. They are durable, as there is no hinged buckle to get out of order and no split ring to break.

Nothing would induce me to ride without spurs, unless to play polo on a pony that might get excited if my spurs were forced against him when being ridden off. Horses go better with spurs, they always know when you have them on and when you haven't, even if you do not use them.

In conclusion let me put this question. Where does one see the best mannered, most temperate and patient horses? And in case the answer is not apparent, here it is. In the army and mounted police, where rowelled spurs are compulsory.



Spur with loop ends and single strap, practical and easy to clean.

CHAPTER VII

THE RIDING SCHOOL

There was once a picture in a comic paper of a tipsy reveller, whose wife is trying to drag him along by the arm. He is saying: 'No, Maria, I will do anything in reason, but I will not go home.'

This seems symbolic of the attitude of many a beginner towards hunting and polo. He will buy expensive horses and ponies, equip himself with good stable gear and with the most beautiful clothes, but he will *not* learn to ride. Nor will he study hunting lore or the tactics of polo, indeed he seldom takes the trouble to learn the rules.

It is the complacency of these youngsters that is so deplorable. If they would only realise their shortcomings, there would be more hope of a general improvement in horsemanship. The prevailing attitude of mind seems to fit that of the small boy who wrote from his preparatory school, 'Dear Father, I am still bottom of the class but I don't find the work at all difficult.'

To attain real horsemanship a man must not be content to make himself just a rider, he must in addition aspire to be a horse-breaker. I maintain, however, that the terms are synonymous. The horse's education, like our own, is never at an end and a controlling influence is always necessary. 'Horse-breaking' (not a pleasant term I admit) is the art of supplying this controlling influence, and therefore only means teaching a horse obedience and keeping him obedient, which is, after all, just 'riding'. If this is not achieved a horse's manners will deteriorate, even if he does not become definitely nappy. He will 'try it on', not necessarily because of a desire to get the better of his rider but perhaps through freshness—overfeeding and under-exercising—he will obtain a glimpse of his power over his rider and find out that he does not need to obey unless he wants to. It may well happen that one such inkling may undo months, even years of expert riding and schooling. It therefore becomes imperative to consider how the skill necessary to avoid this distressing contretemps is obtained. The riding school is the quickest and most efficient medium both for teaching the rider and for the early breaking and schooling of the saddle horse.

The consideration of the former is easily disposed of, and as there is no fear of riding lessons in the school being unduly prolonged, I have

no warning to give on this score. Unfortunately the tendency is all the other way, the pupil's desire to get into the open, out hunting or on to the polo ground, being usually responsible for curtailment of a school course.

There are now happily plenty of civilian schools, but there is always difficulty in persuading young people to avail themselves of them to the full. Yet there is no surer and quicker way of learning correct and scientific equitation.

It is usual, when this point is raised, to instance fine steeplechase riders and brilliant men to hounds, and to point out that they have never in their lives been in a riding school or read a book on the subject. There are three answers to this: firstly, the strength, courage and determination of these riders in their youth are responsible for their performances and reputations. Real skill, resource and finesse only come with maturity, and probably after unnecessary falls and many financial losses on horses that have proved failures. A riding course and a study of the subject by these riders when young would have produced this skill earlier in life, possibly, it may be argued, at the expense of some of their dash; but with the result that they would produce better mannered, sounder horses, and that they would therefore enjoy greater comfort and safety. It is little short of a calamity for a youngster to ride a few Point-to-Point winners early in his career. The adulation of his friends (especially those who have won money on his mounts) leaves him under the impression that he 'knows it all', and to suggest to him that he should go to a school and learn equitation is to ask for a rude retort. He would pull up his stirrups in imitation of the Steeplechase jockey even to go hunting, or to play polo, so that he adopts an attitude which prevents the use of the most important of his aids, his legs, and he is reduced to riding by the bridle. Can one wonder that the attainment of expert horsemanship is delayed?

Secondly, his hunters and polo ponies would command higher prices when they come to be sold, for no matter how good a man's reputation for hard riding may be, if he does not appear comfortable and safe on his horses and ponies their reputation for manners goes by the board and they will never be valuable animals or even comfortable to ride.

Thirdly, a rider who has been taught the correct and scientific use of the aids is in a better position to overcome the resistance of a refractory horse than one who relies on force and haphazard methods, and consequently his nerve is less likely to go.

In this connection it must be remembered that, in England, expert horsemanship seems only to come with mature years. Our polo players seldom reach the higher handicap figures and our cross-country riders

are not at their best till they are over thirty. It would appear that the average age of our best riders is higher than in any other country.

Here it will not be out of place if I again dwell on a point to which it is impossible to attach too much importance.

Riding lessons under a competent instructor will teach a man that he must use his legs as instinctively as he uses his hands. As we have seen in Chapter II it is natural instinct and common usage to rely too much on the hands and to neglect the use of the legs—especially when taken by surprise in moments of emergency or danger. The great art of bringing the legs into play simultaneously with the hands has to be learnt and practised until a new instinct is formed. A straightforward ride in the open may only furnish two or three opportunities for this practice, whereas in the course of an hour's ride in a school, leg and hand must work in unison all the time. Every one of the four corners makes it necessary, every change of direction and of pace. Without this co-ordination there is no riding in the true sense of the word. This subject is dealt with further in the chapter on the spur.

It is generally agreed that riding is partly an art and partly a science: the art must be to a certain extent inherent and to a certain extent the outcome of scientific instruction, but the science itself must be studied. Books will help, but a course of lessons in a riding school under a competent teacher is the only sure way, unless half a lifetime is to be wasted in finding out and applying theoretical principles. (See appendixes.)

It is advisable, therefore, for anyone wishing to improve his riding till he becomes a horseman to put himself under a capable instructor, preferably a skilful and elegant rider, certainly one who knows the theory of horsemanship and is capable of imparting his knowledge in a lucid and interesting way. A groom will be useless unless the student wants to ride like a groom.

The second use of a school is for the education of the horse. In this connection I couple the manège and the riding school, as they both serve the same purpose. They should both be the same size, 100 feet by 40 feet.

As it is found to be easier to gain and retain a horse's attention in a school than in a manège, a lesson in the former place should be shorter, although if the walls of the latter are sufficiently high, and are so built as to prevent a horse from seeing over or through, there is little difference in the efficacy of the two. So when I speak of a riding school I include the manège, but it is necessary to bear in mind these two points: the quieter the school, and the less there is to distract a horse's attention, the more intense is the impression, and the shorter should be the lesson. If a rider is used to a manège bounded by sheep hurdles (the best

to which most of us can rise) he must be careful to avoid prolonging unduly the lessons in a school, should he be so fortunate as to find one at his disposal. Similarly, a rider must not be disappointed if he fails to make progress in a manège as rapidly as he would in a school. I mention this with what may appear to be undue emphasis, because there is nothing that so retards schooling as to prolong a lesson beyond the point where a horse has learnt it.

To take the fullest advantage of such a school it is necessary to be quite clear as to its uses and to devise means to avoid misuses. The chief *use* of the school is to help a rider by means of the walls, and to take advantage of their mental and moral effect on the horse. The long sides of the school help the rider to keep the horse moving in a straight line, and leg application can be lighter in consequence. The corners force a horse not only to turn but also to gather himself together preparatory to turning; this gives balance and poise, with a corresponding lightening of the rein and leg indications. The wall facing a horse will make him stop to avoid running into it, again lightening both rein and leg indications. In all this there is something so useful and at the same time so subtle that it can only be explained by the association of ideas.

Horse-breaking, and equitation generally, is a language. The rider's means of communication are the bit, spur, whip, voice, and later, as perception gets keener, the leg, bit and rein only; all have definite messages. But the wall of the school is the dictionary which helps to translate and to make the rider's indications intelligible. Without the help of the wall the application of bit and spur must be more marked, and the whole course as well as each lesson more prolonged. It is, or should be, the main object of the rider to make all indications as light as possible, indeed a good rider on a well-trained horse should have complete control without any effort being visible to the onlooker. The saying '*ars est celare artem*' is truer of riding than of any other art.

To illustrate the use of the school, here are some examples that will furnish useful data from which to work out others.

We have to cure a horse of that detestable habit of getting hold of the bit when asked to stop. This is what polo players call 'running on'; with the hunter it often happens when the rider takes hold to stop his horse in order to take his turn at a gate or at a gap. He does not want to use a more severe bit, but he wants to teach him to obey a pull at the reins without exaggerated force. The horse should be taken into the school, ridden diagonally into one of the corners, first at the walk, then at the trot, and finally at the canter.¹ He cannot get past the walls and *has* to stop. If the rider will feel the reins (and if he likes to call 'Whoa' in addition), just as the horse is gathering himself for the stop, he will,

¹ See diagram, page 33.

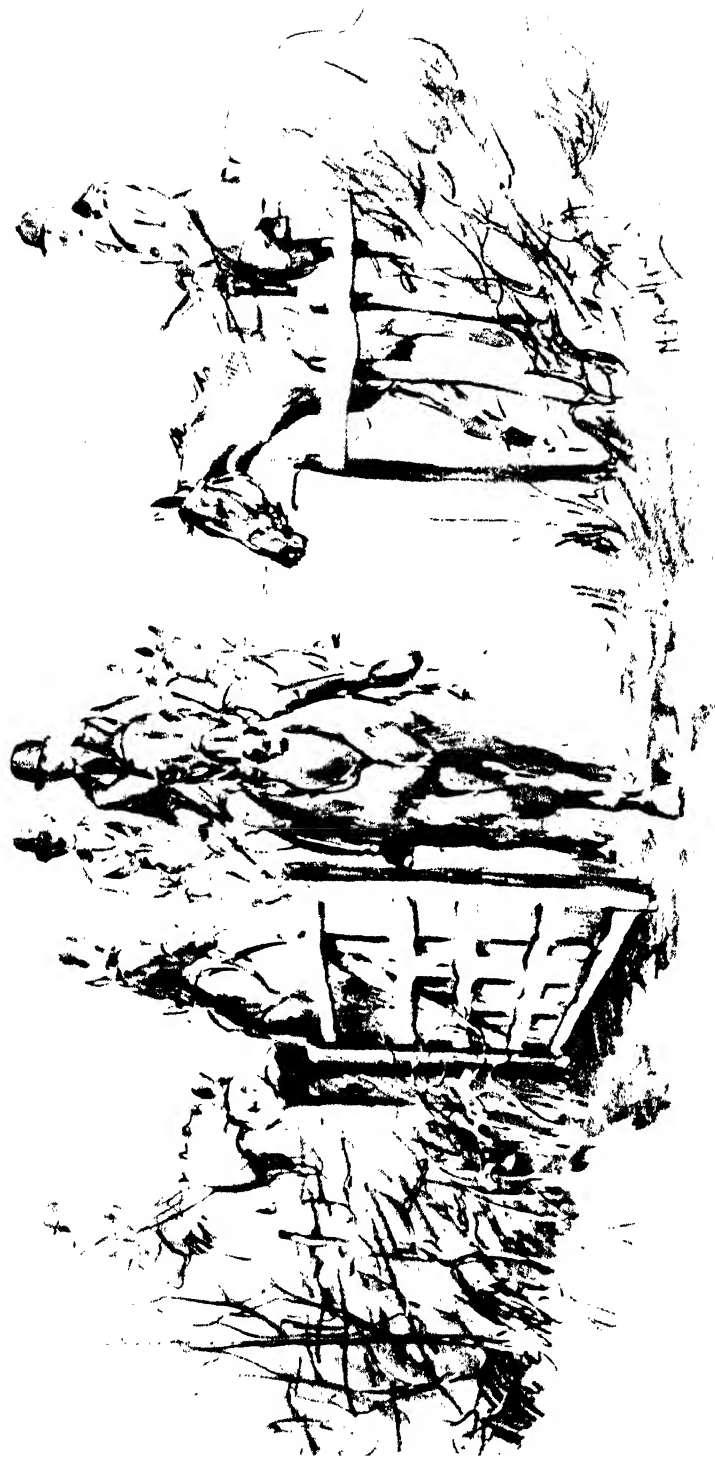
by association of ideas, come to interpret the touch of the bit as an indication to stop. In other words, the walls of the school have helped the rider to convey his meaning without hurting the bars of his horse's mouth.

To make my meaning still clearer let us ask ourselves this fundamental question. Why does a horse stop when, by pulling the reins, pressure is exerted through the bit on the bars of his mouth? It is not as if he were held like a dog chained to a wall, because the rider, who holds the reins, is borne along on his back, and the pull can therefore only be an indication and not a physical restraining force. For this indication to be effective the horse has to be taught that a pull on the reins means that a slower pace is desired. What better way can there be to show him that pressure on the bit has the same meaning as the wall beyond which he cannot go under any circumstances. To his limited reasoning powers the bit will come to seem as impassable as the wall.

Another instance is the rein back. It is imperative for good breaking that the horse should rein back in a straight line, that is, without swinging his hind quarters to one side or the other. Now if we use the leg or spur to keep him straight it may excite the horse; he may misinterpret the indication and think that it is the signal to jump forward, as he should always be made to do after a few paces of the rein back. Now, a horse has always a weak side, one side to which he will answer more readily (this is not necessarily the same side when moving forwards as when backing), so that if we place the opposite side against the long wall of the school he will not be able to swing his quarters to this, his accustomed side, and will move back in a straight line and without the risk of being confused by leg application.

The school is often effective for curing a polo pony of the habit of bounding. It is within the experience of most polo players that they have had light-mouth ponies that bound when pulled up suddenly. Every kind of bit, severe and light, is tried in vain. He must then realise that the pony's mind must be reached by some other means than the bit. Here the wall of the school will not only help to make him adopt the correct position for stopping but he will *have* to stop, and as there is nothing to hurt his mouth there will be no inclination to bound and the habit will be eradicated.

The main problems that the rider has to solve in schooling are, firstly, how to gain the horse's attention; secondly, how to overcome his resistance to control; thirdly, how to convey his wishes to the horse; and fourthly, how to make an impression sufficiently marked to avoid waste of time. To surmount these difficulties, as said before, we use a school, but while using the school educationally we should always try to emphasize the lessons by practical application to work outside.



An important attribute of the schooled hunter.

To attempt to use a riding school for any other purpose than for teaching is a mistake. The human pupil will be bored, and with the horse there will be a tendency to restrict free forward movement and to shorten his stride. We should teach a horse an exercise in the school and put it into practice in the open. Thus, having taught him to move forward on leg pressure and to passage, we can ride him past objects on the road at which he has been accustomed to shy. When a horse learns to obey the leg and rein back, it will be useful to demonstrate that this enables him to co-operate in opening a gate, and it will further help to bring it home to him if the gate leads towards home. If we show a prospective hunter how to get to the other side of a small obstacle in the school, he should then be put to jump a natural fence in the open.

Another instance: when we have taught a polo pony to stop and turn on his hocks, we should take him into the paddock and show him that this is the proper way to turn after hitting a backhander. Again, after a successful lesson in changing legs at the canter, it will help to bring the lesson home if we show a hunter that this is the correct way to turn to get square with a fence, and the safe and easy way for a pony to follow a jinking polo ball.

A school should always be available to correct faults. Out riding we are not always such complete masters of the situation as to be able to fight matters out. Slippery roads and crowded traffic have increased our difficulty. But the thought that we have a school at hand enables us, when prudence demands, to temporise with a refractory horse. Later, in the school, we can apply correction, when on non-slippery tan within four walls we have him more at our command, or rather, when we are not so much at his mercy.

If a horse shows reluctance to remain on the grass verge on one or other side of the road he should be taken into the school and put through a short recapitulation of leg work.

If we find a hunter is getting into refusing habits again the school will help us to re-emphasize the necessity for obedience to the aids, beginning with the turn on the fore hand, through a correctly executed passage, and finishing with an easy jump over a pole. If a polo pony gets heavy in hand, and fails to stop on his hocks, the walls of the school always facing him will convey the necessity of keeping his hocks under him so as to be ready to pull up and turn. This, as already shown, will tend to lessen the pull on the reins and thereby relieve the bars of the mouth from undue pressure, so that the pony's mouth becomes lighter and lighter, his mind having been trained to interpret the bridle indications.

There are various forms of schools in use with the idea of improving a hunter's jumping. They should be used with great caution. It is

unwise to use one at all with an impetuous horse as there is a tendency to make such a horse hot and impatient.

In most hunting countries to-day it is so often necessary to wait one's turn, and observation shows that horses that have been chivvied round and round these schools are impatient when they have to wait their turn at a fence out hunting. So this may be another misuse of the school.

The riding school is an instrument of great severity, and it must be the rider's aim never to abuse it or the result will certainly be a struggle unnecessarily vehement and prolonged. A pupil may easily become so fatigued and disheartened that he reaches a state of sullen defiance—a frame of mind in which he is incapable of assimilating anything.

So it will happen that many a time a rider will feel obliged to pull up after a lesson of only five minutes, if there has been a definite indication that the horse has understood; it is then necessary to convey to him that he has done well by making much of him, dismounting and leading him back to the stable.

Suppose we did not adopt this course, but instead went on repeating the exercise over and over again with the mistaken idea of impressing it upon his mind; he will wonder what it is we really do want, and he will never know that he has given satisfaction; in future there will be no incentive to obey unless obedience has been immediately followed by reward. Further, the reward must follow obedience without a second's delay, while on the other hand the aid to correct a rebellious movement must be applied in definite and direct opposition to counter this movement. If there is any pause there is no way of conveying to the horse that reward is for a general compliance or that punishment is for a misdeed.

A lesson should never stop unless a horse has given in, but it must stop as soon as he has. This often presents another problem, but intelligence and thought will solve it. A rider finds himself with half-an-hour to spare, and a horse to school. We will say that he has got to the stage where the horse has to be taught the rein back. The rider finds that his pupil resists, and he therefore dismounts to give him the preliminary lesson on foot. The resistance is overcome, and the next thing to decide is whether to be content with this or whether to try to obtain the rein back mounted.

Experience is the sole guide, coupled with a correct appreciation of the rider's capabilities and the horse's temperament, but it is wise to be content with little, rather than to risk regret through being too persistent.

It is impossible to determine the duration of a lesson beforehand.

If we feel that the lesson has been learnt, we must be content to waste the remainder of the half-hour rather than continue and thereby court defiance. There is no surer way of spoiling a horse's temper than by pushing one's authority beyond this point; in fact, he may become so exasperated that he fights and struggles blindly against leg and bit, and may even crash his way through the hurdles of the manège, or trap the rider's leg against the wall of the school, definitely jibbing and refusing all movement.

On the other hand, the time available should, within reason, not be limited, because the resistance may be protracted; here the tact of the rider must come to his aid if the lesson has to stop with the task unfulfilled. The lesson may have to be cut short because of fatigue on the part of the horse or rider, evening may come and it may get too dark. Then it will become necessary to change the point at issue, abandon the particular lesson and substitute another, something easier, or at all events, one that we feel sure the horse will perform. This will give the opportunity to finish, dismount and make much of him, for in this way the lesson does not finish with successful resistance as the predominant impression, on the contrary the impression left on his mind is that ease has followed compliance.

School work requires resource, knowledge, practice, patience and self-control; resource, because ingenuity must devise a means of overcoming the resistance of an animal stronger and more persistent than ourselves, and one which easily becomes so discouraged that his resistance becomes blind and disorderly; knowledge of the correct sequence of exercises; patience to go on trying the same exercise over and over again if necessary; and self-control, to avoid becoming exasperated at a horse's apparently pointless resistance.

Above all, the rider must avoid working on haphazard lines. The exercises he practises in the school should be few, and must be designed to a definite end, and he should be able to render an account of all his actions and indications.

Given a school correctly used, it will be found that the time required to break a horse will be reduced in the aggregate, from months to weeks, and each lesson reduced from hours to minutes.

PART III

THE CHOICE OF A HORSE



The Prospective purchaser

CHAPTER I

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE CHOICE OF A HORSE

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Some time in the career of the horseman he will wish to possess a horse of his own and it is imperative that he should be able to recognise the kind of animal that suits him. It is one thing to compare two horses seen side by side, but by no means easy to carry make and shape in one's eye.

But before we get down to the practical study of make and shape—too comprehensive a subject to deal with here—we have to consider points in the human psychology as well as the equine psychology, where they harmonize and where they clash. A friend, if he is an experienced horseman, can help you to choose a horse of good conformation and a veterinary surgeon can give you an opinion on its soundness; but you have to decide for yourself whether your temperaments harmonize or not.

However much thought we give to the psychology of the horse, our conclusion will be incomplete and often misleading unless we give at least as much to the human psychology. It is not enough to study the idiosyncrasies of various horses that come under our notice. We cannot arrive at practical or even useful conclusions unless we also study the mentality of horsemen in general, and also of each individual horseman in direct relation to each individual horse; and here we have the groom as well as the owner to consider. But people are unwilling either to study the horse's psychology or to make allowances for the equally great variation in the psychology of horsemen. They prefer to assume uniformity in the mentality of the human being, and also to endow the horse with noble qualities of self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, personal affection for man (especially if the man happens to be the owner), a human intelligence—in fact, 'qualities of the head and heart' so exalted as to rival even those of saints and martyrs. Whyte Melville maintained that the rider is often the bigger fool of the two. Perhaps he was right.

Where practical principles come most into conflict with accepted theory is at the point when it has to be considered whether the horse will do any work for us except under compulsion. Has he, in short, any *desire* to please, and does he perform his task for any other reason than a failure to realise his powers of resistance?

I will at once repeat the warning that fox-hunting is an exception; keenness to be after hounds and a fox seems to be inborn. 'The only work to which a horse can be put, from which it derives any pleasure and in which it takes any personal interest, is fox-hunting. This is probably due to an atavistic trait. The instinct of self-preservation in the wild ancestor would account for the joy in hunting and slaying a carnivorous animal. I can explain in no other way the keenness in a hunt and satisfaction at a kill some horses display, even though they may never have seen hounds before. The best that can be said of other saddle horses is that they are willing, sometimes even cheerful slaves.'¹

Instances are often quoted to disprove these arguments, but they are all based on erroneous assumption and are the result of faulty deduction. An example from a recent book on horses reads:

'Music has a soothing effect on horses and is most useful in teaching paces (*sic*). They generally keep excellent time to music.'

One writer insists on a horse's 'willing co-operation', and maintains that he relies more upon an appeal to this trait than upon association of ideas acting on the instinct of self-preservation, but when this theory is put to the test we find that failure to bring a horse to reason proves that this method cannot be relied upon.

Every horseman must in the course of his career have had the experience of a horse whose intelligence so resembled that of a human being that he knew to a nicety where his rider's power over him failed and therefore just how far he need obey.

There is no 'willing co-operation' in such an animal and indeed in any unbroken horse, co-operation under compulsion or, at the best, unreluctant co-operation being all one can hope for until a horse is broken.

Of course, *all* riding, schooling and stable management must be based on co-operation between mount and man. Compulsion on the man's part is out of the question, as the horse is too strong and heavy to be controlled by force. Therefore the horseman must teach him to obey indications in such a way that in time he will come to co-operate. But in its bare meaning this word is too vague, although when qualified it becomes an excellent one to describe the progressive educational phases culminating in the mastery to which every horseman must attach the greatest importance. We employ equestrian tact to steer a horse through these stages. We have to begin with conditional co-operation, to which such actions belong as enticing a youngster forward to obtain a carrot: thence through co-operation under compulsion via unreluctant to willing co-operation, till finally we reach that quality most desired in a good hunter, polo pony or hack, cheerful co-operation.

¹*Bridle Wise.*

I can say quite definitely that I have never discovered in the unbroken horse a trace of this willingness to co-operate, although there are always instances that with a little imagination and sentiment can be so interpreted.

Skilled horsemanship is quite out of the reach of those who think they can ride by 'making things unpleasant for the horse until he obeys',¹ except in so far as all coercion is unpalatable.

'It is just in this matter of a horse's dislikes that we fail most lamentably, for we find it impossible to differentiate between his various dislikings. It is clearly enough laid down that there are two rules common to the education of horses and men, to which there should be no exception. If your man or your horse dislikes something which is necessary, he must be encouraged not to dislike it, and, in the last resort, compelled to do it.'²

SYMPATHY

A writer of a modern horse book purporting to be practical speaks over and over again, somewhat vaguely, of 'sympathy', and, interpreting the word in its sentimental sense, goes as far as to publish a ridiculous and rather disgusting photograph of a horse kissing a man's lips. But as the same writer maintains that a horse 'notices the expression of our faces', and adds, 'Our gaze will subdue him when he is angry,' perhaps he should not be taken too seriously.

It is instructive to consider what sympathy there can be between a horse and his master before we accept any sentimental interpretation. The truest interpretation of sympathy in so far as it is applicable to advanced horsemanship, is the power to act susceptibly and therefore promptly, the rider to counter the intentions of his mount and the horse to obey the rider. Of course, our horses must be comfortably housed, suitably fed, and kept clean. Their health must be maintained, their ailments cured, and they must be kept fit enough to perform their task. But we must not deceive ourselves, this is not sympathy, but simple economics. A horse's wishes cannot be considered where they differ from our own; we cannot, for example, allow ourselves to be affected by his desire to cease work and return to the stables when we want him to go on. If his gregarious instinct prompts him to stay with his fellows we have to take active steps to drive him away from them. In fact, *every trait that militates against his usefulness has to be repressed*, and only the instincts that our skill can turn into a groove of usefulness must be fostered. What are the latter? The instinct to seek safety in flight and the other branch of the instinct of self-preservation prompting him to avoid discomfort and pain.

¹G. Bernard Shaw.

²Crascedo.

If, therefore, we approach the subject of the horse's mentality from the point of view of reason and observation, rather than of sentiment, not only shall we get nearer to understanding him, but our treatment of him—being in consequence more logical and therefore more rational—will be the more humane. Then, if each individual horse's disposition is taken into account, not only by itself but also in conjunction with our own, the beginning of a true understanding and something akin to a sympathetic bond will have been established.

A man may study the mentality of the horse all his life, but he seldom gets beyond the fringe of the subject. There are two reasons for this. First, a horse's powers of expression are so limited that it is often impossible to imagine what he is thinking about, what is his trouble, what is making him discontented and restless. This is our main difficulty. Secondly, most owners have been obliged to leave much of their horses' exercise and their care in the stable to the groom, so that the opportunity for observation is in the hands of two individuals, and however close the liaison between the two it can never be complete.

This much experience teaches us. One must never draw conclusions from isolated examples and one must be practical and never sentimental. One must not endow the horse with a human or even a canine understanding. His intelligence is in no way comparable with that of a dog, or, for the matter of that, with any other domesticated animal; it is different.

It is therefore necessary for the horseman to cultivate his powers of observation and to take every opportunity of widening his experience by the study of many and varied examples, so that by this means he may avoid the danger of generalising from isolated instances.

Above all, he must learn to draw *correct* deductions from his observations and resist the temptation to see exalted motives in commonplace actions.

A horse will avoid treading on a fallen man just as he will avoid a molehill or a rabbit hole, but if his safety is in jeopardy he will consider nothing else.

I once tried to buy a hunter from a girl who, before she would agree to part, wanted to make the most elaborate stipulations as to the mare's ultimate fate if ever I should desire to re-sell. Her reason for this was that 'the mare had once saved her life'. This was the story. Leaning over to open a gate she had been pulled off and had remained hung up by the skirt of her habit, head downwards. The mare stood rock still for what had seemed hours, but which proved in reality to be some minutes only, till she was freed by a passing labourer. Her owner firmly believed that her mount, realising the danger she was in, had deliberately refrained from moving for fear of hurting her. This particular mare was a

demon in the stables, and to groom her was like a battle; outside she was better, but very restless and inclined to squeal and kick. If we look at the matter practically we can only come to the conclusion that it was fear for her own safety that made the mare stand still. Such an unaccustomed obstacle hanging in such a position impressed upon her the fact that, for her own sake, she had better not move.

This should be considered side by side with the means sometimes adopted to prevent a horse from kicking in the stable. A small bag stuffed with hay can be strapped to a hind fetlock. A foreleg should be held up while this is done and the horse carefully watched as the foreleg is released, for although it usually has the effect of deterring him from kicking, presumably because he is afraid this strange thing will hurt him, just a few horses will kick with redoubled vigour in order to free themselves. The horse I have described, fortunately, did not belong to the second category.

In the end my sentimental friend had to adopt a more reasonable frame of mind and drop her stipulations, or she would never have found a customer. The mare was ultimately sold at auction, and her fate would, in the end, be the common one of all worn-out horses.

THE ARAB TRADITION

It is popularly believed that the Arab's love of his horse is such that it is brought up as 'one of the family' and actually there is a foundation for this belief. The Arab stableman seems incapable of that impatience and irritation with a horse's apparent irresponsibility to which many English grooms are prone.

It would be hardly possible to adopt the Arab method of treatment for many reasons. Our climate is against it for one thing, our national character for another, and anyway our mode of life prevents it. The horses in Prince Mohamed Ali's stud in Cairo, after a period of acclimatization in the desert, are stabled more or less under European conditions, and as a result they are not so docile as those that have never been in loose-boxes.

The Prince told me that his horses do not take on the true Arab characteristics until they have spent these months in the desert. This accounts for much of the difference between the Arab bred in his native environment and that bred in this country. (See Chapter IV.)

But then the selection of sire and dam at this great stud is not on orthodox lines. The Prince has made a collection of old prints and drawings showing the traditional Arab horse, the horse of poetry and romance. These serve as his guide, and it is his aim to breed to this standard. Every sire and dam, as well as their progeny, are studied with this ideal before him, and the tests are applied with almost mathematical

precision. Any that fall short in the minutest detail are ruthlessly weeded out and sold.

Photographs of some of the horses placed alongside old prints show how surely he is approaching his goal. In reply to an unguarded question as to the utility of a stud of horses that were never ridden, we were told that the attainment of an ideal need have no utilitarian object, and just as we in Europe hang beautiful pictures on our walls to look at and to admire, so he has his beautiful horses. I must say that those we saw, especially those that had already spent their maturing months in the desert, excelled in beauty any work of art it has ever been my good fortune to see.

The guiding principles governing the selection of the sire and dam of our English thoroughbred stock are different: soundness, speed and endurance being the outstanding consideration; it is the blood of the thoroughbred that permeates our saddle horses, and, as impetuosity is one of the most desirable attributes in the racehorse, the result is that free forward movement in the offspring has to be controlled and guided into a path of usefulness in order to make a hunter or polo pony. This is as it should be, for if this free forward movement does not come naturally of itself, and if it has to be created by whip and spur, there is hope only of a limited success.

BREAKING AND RIDING

An important point in considering the psychology of the horseman is that a rider must have it firmly ingrained that riding and breaking are inseparable. Good riding is horse-breaking nearly all the time. *All* riding must carry with it a certain aptitude for applying the aids in such a way as to overcome the resistance of the horse. This *is* horse-breaking.

Bad riding, the reverse of this, and the acceptance as inevitable of the impairment of the horse's manner, is unworthy of any consideration other than how to improve it. The way to improve it is first to study the individuality of every horse and the scientific application of the aids, and then to practise until this becomes automatic.

But we are not always in a physical or mental state to cope with a refractory horse. It is unfortunate that as the horse loses his freshness the rider usually tires also. This is a problem, but if it is approached with thought and intelligence it will be found that the realisation of the problem involved will provide its solution in that compromise which leads to expert handling. This can be described as sympathy or expediency according to the sentimentality of the rider.

Not so easy of solution is the problem of the tired man on the fresh horse; and yet this is another problem that often faces us as we

mount our second horse after a gruelling morning, or towards the end of a polo match when we pull out a pony for his first chukker.

THE SUITABLE HORSE

Many men and women begin their careers on an old, staid, experienced hunter, which carries them in comfort and safety, induces a real taste for the sport, gives them nerve, and, freeing their minds from personal anxiety, enables them to concentrate on keeping with hounds. It is their second venture that so often presents difficulties. They will want something younger, faster and altogether more dashing, but it is doubtful whether there has been sufficient improvement in their horsemanship to warrant so drastic a change.

Vanity and the lure of cheapness are responsible for men making offers for unsuitable horses too hastily. They disregard their limitations and fail to take into consideration the difference between their experience and skill and that of the seller. A trial undoubtedly adds to the price of a horse, but it is invariably worth the extra cost.

There are, therefore, two ways of avoiding a clash of temperament. The most satisfactory way is, of course, as said before, to be horseman enough to break a horse to suit yourself. Failing this there is nothing for it but a personal trial with hounds or in a chukker, before purchase. The best way to obtain this trial is by paying for it, adding a proviso that, should the horse suit, there is liberty to make an offer, and it is wise to be explicit and direct in making the arrangements for this trial and the subsequent offer. Men are, for some reason, shy over the matter and prefer to leave it nebulous, rather than clear-cut.

A dealer in a big way of business once told me that one of his chief difficulties was to prevent his customers buying unsuitable horses, animals too difficult for them altogether. Here the lure of good looks or the Point-to-Point is responsible as well. Good looks mean quality, and quality means fire, dash and pace. A Point-to-Point horse nowadays is a racehorse, and it is rare that he will be a pleasant or an easy hunter for any but the finished and courageous rider.

When buying a horse, therefore, a man should stipulate for a trial that will enable him to make sure (as far as it is humanly and equinely possible to be sure) that the animal will suit him. Part of this trial ought to be a day with hounds or in a game of polo. The former should begin with a hack on to the meet, the latter should consist of two chukkers in a fast game. If possible both should be followed by a night in the purchaser's stable and a veterinary examination. Then for the trial to be complete for modern requirements, one ought to know whether a horse is quiet to box, not only in a railway horse-box, but also in a motor van and in a trailer.

Anyway, a horse that suits will never be dear, whereas if you allow yourself to have landed on you one with which you are out of sympathy, whatever the price, it cannot be anything but a bad bargain.

THE UNSUITABLE HORSE

Horsemen are apt to lose sight of the fact that they are dealing with an animal whose instincts have only made the life mapped out for him possible because a way has been found to dominate him by means of superior intelligence, but they can at least select a horse whose conformation is suitable to the particular walk in life for which he is intended. Conformation is a point on which we can be reasonably sure. To put it crudely, one too often sees the attempt to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. It requires courage to face the fact that we have bought an unsuitable horse; but there is only one way out of it—we must sell. It is no use persevering in opposition to our better judgment.

It requires more courage to face the fact that we have *bred* a bad one, and more courage still to admit to ourselves that the whole of our breeding is on wrong lines and that we must begin again. And yet we know in our hearts that the sooner we face the facts, the less our loss in money, time, energy and thought. Life is too short to persist along incorrect lines with a breeding stud of horses. It cannot take less than twelve years for a man to build up anything approaching a successful stud, and then only if he has had the foresight, knowledge, judgment and *luck* to start on sound lines; but it is obvious that there is not time in a man's life to make many false starts.

The decision to cut our loss and scrap our venture, whether in buying or in breeding, cannot be easy to make, because one sees so many people persevering with hunters and polo ponies which they must know in their hearts will never be a success with them. I am myself a persistent offender, and yet I cannot recall an instance when I have regretted scrapping a doubtful animal and I do not like to think how often I have obstinately hung on to failures in spite of (possibly because of) family warnings. The perfectly correct and logical opinion of a friend, tactlessly expressed, has, I regret to say, often been the cause of prolonging the struggle, in spite of the inevitable failure that stared me in the face.

CHAPTER II

HEREDITY AND THE CHOICE OF A HORSE

Heredity is a point that must be studied by the man who aspires to advanced horsemanship. At its highest there is the ability to select yearlings eventually to win races *and to remain sound during training*.

A horseman must be able to choose a hack, hunter or polo pony to suit himself. Both these considerations embrace a knowledge of heredity as well as of conformation.

It is a lamentable fact that after trying for upwards of 3000 years to produce the perfect saddle horse we are still so far from our goal. There are still too many bad horses and all too few that can do fast work and remain sound. There is a better chance now of improving matters in the future as there are few horses required for any purpose other than riding, so there is less temptation or indeed opportunity to bring in a progenitor of the wrong type. But until sires and dams unsuited to fast work, carrying at least twelve stone, are eliminated from the studs the breed of the saddle horse must continually suffer deterioration. The principal offenders are the owners with favourite mares whom they are unwilling to destroy when they are past their work. It is the custom to castrate all males from which it is undesirable to breed, but the unsuitable mares are left unsterilized to produce the unsound, unsightly, useless animals that disfigure the hunting field and polo ground.¹

Every experienced horseman tries to buy a thoroughbred if he can afford to pay the price. But the cost of such a horse, up to weight and with the schooling necessary to make him a comfortable ride, is often prohibitive. One should then go for one so well bred that in appearance and *action* it is as like a thoroughbred as possible.

James Fillis, a great exponent of educative riding (miscalled in our horsey language 'Horse-breaking'), writes, in his advice on buying a horse:

'With respect to breed, we find in the first line of my book the cry of my heart: "I teach only thoroughbreds." I unhesitatingly put thoroughbreds above all others. They are pre-eminently the best for all

¹See also *An Eye for a Horse* by the same author.

kinds of work. Besides, a man who has got into the habit of riding thoroughbreds will not care to ride any other horses.

'For me the ruling qualities of the thoroughbred are the lightness, the elasticity of the fine steel spring which puts them into action, and the suppleness which will be developed by breaking. If we listen from afar off for the sound of his footfalls we shall hardly hear them on account of the lightness with which he puts his feet on the ground. He skims the ground, which he treads with a delicacy full of energy. The feet of other horses, compared to his, clatter and hammer the ground, and their paces are much heavier.'¹

Now it behoves the horseman to ask himself this question. What useful hereditary qualities can I look for, apart from the qualities that environment and training can supply?

I once bought a thoroughbred by a stallion which we will call X——. I sent a Fellow of the R.C.V.S., a man of wide experience of thoroughbred stock, to examine him for soundness, and his spontaneous comment at the end of the certificate is worth quoting. He wrote, 'I do not know whether you have any experience of X——'s stock, but I have known many of his progeny and I never knew a bad one by him. They all take to hunting without any trouble.'

Had this horse not been of exceptional symmetry this remark would have left me cold, but as I was very pleased with his make, shape and action I looked upon it merely as a confirmation of what my eye could see.

Make, shape and action play such a great part in deciding whether or not it is worth while to proceed with the education of a resisting horse, that this question of heredity and its application not only to polo ponies but to hunters and other saddle horses also is of paramount importance to the horseman. Suitable inherited *conformation* is the most important factor and this is followed closely by that of soil, environment and early training, while the theory of inherited temperament and other mental qualities must be received with great reserve.

By some it is thought that this view is too pessimistic. 'Is there not', they ask, 'thought and brain behind it all?' 'Can we not look for *mental* improvement from one generation to another?' And in this connection examples of heredity in dogs are quoted to show how easily they can be trained if they have been bred from parents who know their job.

But this is confusing acquired *physical* characteristics with the susceptibility to instinctive actions, also with environment and teaching. I quote from *Heredity*, by J. A. S. Watson, B.Sc., F.R.S.E.:

'It will be seen that if such characteristics are ever inherited, then

¹*Breaking and Riding*, James Fillis.

we must assume some very intimate connection between various parts of the body on one hand, and the reproductive organs on the other. Some such connection as Darwin assumed in his Pangenesis theory. Finally, we have the difficulty of conceiving any mechanism which would bring about the inheritance of modifications.'

And I add:

'It is now universally accepted that the development of any particular organ or set of muscles in the parent, and during their lifetime, will produce in the offspring no corresponding modification. We have only to reduce the Darwinian theory of Pangenesis to the absurd by instancing mutilations and amputations in the parents.'

The scientific aspects of the many puzzling points of heredity are still awaiting explanation and our knowledge of the subject in its wide aspect is far from complete, but the subject can be considered in so far as it is applicable to the horse.

As a beginning, the examples which appear in *Bridle Wise* can be used to emphasize the points quoted above:

'The problem we have to solve is this, and the question is neither new nor original. We breed from a young, unbroken mare and obtain a foal; the mare is then broken and taught polo, at which she excels. She is then once more put to the stud, and, by the same horse, breeds another foal. Will her later offspring be easier to teach polo than her first? The example of the entire racehorse illustrates the point better, as in this case we could widen our experience. Before trying him for racing he could go to the stud and serve a large number of mares. Then, after winning a series of races, he could again serve the same mares. The question here is: would the second batch of foals be more likely to be winners than the first? The large majority of biologists say "No". Neither the mare's polo training nor the development of the stallion's racing powers can affect the offspring, and this we must accept.'

But we can go a step further than this. Let us assume that a first-class racehorse, through having been badly ridden, overfed, or perhaps beaten, has in consequence had his temper spoiled and has lost his form, and with it his capacity for winning. Would one expect the foals got by him after he ceased to be a good racehorse to be worse horses than those born before? My answer, for what it is worth, is unhesitatingly 'No'. Nevertheless we must not lose sight of the fact that unhygienic surroundings and poor feeding tend to degeneration of a breed.

It is assumed by many that 'physical characteristics' apply to the externals only, that they must necessarily be visible to the eye and obvious to the touch; but is there not in addition, texture of bone and tissue, the sensibility of the nervous system and its power to respond ('conductivity' of the nerves), the shape and volume of the brain, and

the cubic capacity of the body containing the vital organs? Further, there may be temporary derangement of digestion, loss of health due to under or overfeeding. All these points play their part in affecting a horse's temperament, his docility and his powers generally, and have to be taken into account in the handling of the animal from his earliest youth.

If the owner is also the breeder, he may be fortunate enough to be able to vouch for the logic of the treatment that has fallen to the young horse's lot up to the time he begins to turn him into a hunter or a polo pony; more often, however, the youngster only comes into his possession and under his notice for the first time at five or six years old.

With many young horses it is often necessary first to spend considerable time in giving them confidence both in and out of the stable—confidence that may have been lost through treatment unsuited to their nervous sensibility and degree of education. It does not take much to make a young horse, new to the stable, first suspicious, then apprehensive and finally resentful. He is surrounded for the first time by four walls and is thereby prevented from seeking safety in flight, his natural instinct whenever hurt or threatened. The amount of corn he can stand has also to be ascertained; you can drive a horse mad with an excess of oats.

This brings out two points: firstly, that physical characteristics are not only the externals visible to the eye, and secondly, that it is not possible to separate so-called temperament from suitable or unsuitable conformation and rational or irrational handling and feeding.

Then we have the question of environment. I will give some examples. I am convinced that by practising polo manœuvres (which include breaking to stick and ball) in the field where unbroken ponies are running out, the youngsters, when they come up, are easier to teach from having watched the others being schooled.

To the older horseman it is little short of a marvel how seldom a horse shies nowadays at what we used to call 'road nuisances'. Horses have become accustomed to motor cars and tarmac. They seldom shy at the former and have learnt how to adapt their action to the latter.

The children of musicians, it is true, inherit the make and shape of fingers and arms as well as the conformation of the skull, the texture of the brain, muscle and nerve. But apart from this, the atmosphere of music in which they live from their earliest infancy must tend to make them more susceptible to music and to give them better understanding of it. One could multiply instances *ad infinitum*.

It is difficult with our finite minds to imagine certain accepted facts such as space and infinity, and just as difficult to imagine that the microscopic germs of reproduction can be affected by chance physi-



Herding.

cal or mental development in the parents (especially in the sire) in such a way as to bring about corresponding mental and physical modifications in the offspring. Although one can prove nothing, one must, with the miracle of paternal likenesses, be ready to admit that such a phenomenon can exist, invisible to the human eye and unappreciated by man's understanding; but could such a possibility be accepted, then, if a polo pony bred three foals—one before she learnt polo, one after she had become proficient, and the third after she had, *through bad riding*, become so sick of the game that she would no longer play—one would have to assume that the second foal would be the easiest to school, and the last the most difficult.

Does not this seem too far fetched, and does it not seem to explode the theory of the transmission of mental characteristics? To me the theory seems absurd, and the accident of the parent having actually played polo cannot make any difference, although the fact that her conformation is such that she *could* play polo will make all the difference in the world.

Mendel and the later scientists who have worked at the subject are far from having solved the problem of heredity, and I, an uninformed amateur, am even more in the dark.

There are foxhounds that inherit extraordinary tendencies. One will always run along under the whipper-in's off-side stirrup as her father used to; another will always carry a piece of broken-up fox in his mouth to the next covert, as his mother did. There is an authentic instance of a man who inherited a walking stick from his great-grandfather, and discovered that the ferrule was worn down in the same peculiar and characteristic way as his own, and on enquiry he found that neither his father's nor his grandfather's sticks showed this peculiarity.

We see in nature the improvement of breeds by 'natural selection', but such improvement is always towards better equipment for the battle of life (the theory of the survival of the fittest). In domesticated animals artificial selection *accelerates* improvement for man's purpose by eliminating from the stud the least suitable for the task demanded. Obvious examples are weight-carrying power in the hunter, speed in the racehorse, milk-yield in cattle and the egg-laying strain in fowls, but these are mostly improvements along the lines of nature, and there is nothing resembling the artificiality of polo.

Now, cannot *mental* characteristics be altered by selection? As the savage disposition is apparently eliminated from the domesticated races of dogs, why cannot a strain of horses be produced with mental characteristics particularly suitable for hunting and polo—gameness, dash, speed, combined with controllability? I contend that environ-

ment plays so great a part in making the companionable, tractable dog, that if you were to turn a thousand loose in the woods, where they had to fend for themselves, the weakest would die and the remainder would quickly revert to a wild state.

But polo-playing, and indeed carrying a man and bending to his will are such entirely unnatural performances, that there is nothing in a horse's instinct that can be developed by selection to form a race to play a game with complicated man-made rules. Speed and stamina can be developed and soundness and conformation can be improved by selection; but we must look to environment and teaching for the necessary mental qualities, and to suitable make and shape for skill.

At the same time it is no use shutting our eyes to the phenomena which surround us. There must be something more than make and shape, or even mental attributes, that is transmitted; in fact, the tendency to perform definite actions must spring from somewhere. There must, for instance, have been an original cuckoo who discovered the profitable trick of laying its eggs in the nests of other birds, and it is unbelievable that the original bird taught the dodge to the next generation; and who teaches the young cuckoos to oust the rightful heirs from the nest? So also with nest-building. How does each succeeding generation of birds know how to make nests exactly like their parents?

All this shows that heredity and its effect on the offspring is too subtle and obscure for anyone to form a useful working theory, beyond the one that maintains that 'Like tends to produce like'. But this refers mainly to the transmission of physical characteristics. Without the physical capacity to perform the task demanded mental qualities are worse than useless, for then the spirit would be willing, the flesh weak, and unsoundness and fatigue the inevitable result.

It is certainly necessary to draw a well-defined line between evolution along the lines of *natural* selection and the products of *artificial* selection. In nature, the instinct of self-preservation becomes more marked from generation to generation, as the encroachment of civilisation intensifies the need for cunning and resource. Nature has always in view the survival of the fittest, which, from her standpoint, are those best equipped in the wild state for the struggle for existence. With animals bred in captivity, on the other hand, the problems of ways and means do not arise, because the sheltered life solves them all. The selection of sire and dam is made with a definite human, as distinct from a natural purpose, and the need for self-protective action lessens. Therefore, with the horse, it follows that with each succeeding generation the tendency to inherit the instinct of self-preservation weakens.

Now this instinct of self-preservation acts in two ways. It renders a horse impatient of control, because of his love of freedom, and it

makes him fly from a threat. The former has to be *overcome* in breaking; the latter, which is the only trait of which we can make any use, has to be *guided* into a groove of usefulness. This usefulness is the goal of the breeders, the selectors of the parents.

We can therefore expect, as a result of the sheltered life referred to, a desire to escape disagreeable consequences to intensify, and resistance to control to weaken. The net result is that with evolution there is a slight (very slight) increase of docility.

The question of those inherited qualities of mind which are summed up by hunting and polo men as 'temperament' can be, and are, left to take care of themselves in the selection of sire and dam, but conformation and action are rightly considered paramount.

This is the guiding principle of our agricultural societies and horse shows; the brood mares and stallions are awarded prizes and premiums for their make, shape and action but neither pedigree nor docility are considered and it is the prize and premium winners that are the parents of the next generation.

That is the first point I wish to make. The owner and breeder, to be successful, must have a wide knowledge of conformation and action, and must have firmly in his mind the type most suitable for the task demanded. He must familiarise himself with the shape, action and breeding that experience has shown make for soundness, that give the power to carry weight, with speed, endurance and comfort to the rider.

Animals possessing these qualities are the only ones to buy for one's own use and to breed from. Even if we are considering the fate of a favourite hunter or polo mare, we should not send her to the stud unless she possessed the desired physical points of conformation, and freedom from any deformity.

My second point is (and I again emphasize it at the risk of reiteration), having bought or bred a sound, symmetrical blood horse, we must handle it scientifically from the start, in and out of the stable, each individual animal according to its 'temperament'—*i.e.* its power of resistance and nervous disposition—and not on stereotyped lines. Thus and thus only have we any hope of success.

CHAPTER III

CONFORMATION, AND THE CHOICE OF A HORSE¹

Although an artistic training and a knowledge of mechanics helps us to appreciate symmetry and to design better machines, we have had to turn to nature for our original ideas.

All beauty springs from nature—the colour and scent of flowers, the human voice, the hues of the rainbow, the glory of a sunset, for example.

The principle of mechanical design is likewise based on nature; we turn to the fish for the torpedo, to the seal for the submarine, and to the carrier pigeon for the aeroplane. Most of the mechanical devices used in mechanics are adaptations of the limbs and joints of humans, animals, birds and fishes ; in many instances, they are the simulation of the movements of the human hands.

In the same way as with mechanical design, it has been necessary to study what particular make and shape in a horse produce speed, soundness and endurance, and what faults of conformation predispose him to diseases of bone, joint, tendon and ligament, as well as of the respiratory system.

In mechanism, faults are quickly corrected in the next ‘model’ by re-designing and by strengthening such parts as display weakness. But with a horse it is impossible to correct design in ‘subsequent models’ by any other process than by breeding, so we employ *artificial* selection. By Nature’s method, *natural* selection, a breed is kept at a more or less dead level of excellence, the weeding out of the poorer specimens being governed by the predominance of the strongest males and by the primitive law of nature—the survival of the fittest. *Artificial* selection of the parents is a much quicker and more effective way of improving a breed, as we have here a goal in view more definite than that provided by the simple laws of nature, and the breeder must be prepared to eliminate from the stud animals displaying any particular weakness or malformation. Or if the make and shape of the parent stock do not reveal such weakness to the expert eye, then, nevertheless, the parents of unsuccessful *offspring* must not be mated a second time. But as it takes at least three years until the next model can be produced (one for gestation

¹See also *An Eye for a Horse* by the same author.

and two more till a horse is old enough to be tested) the process of re-designing is a slow one compared to that of a machine. Further, a horse being perishable, after a time there is only a record of his performances left, although it is true there may still be his descendants to guide us.

But it will be argued that, the horse being a living entity, there is something here besides mere angles, levers and strength of material—there is the quick nervous response and what is known in horsey language as ‘courage’, the capacity for struggling in adversity and for rising superior to fatigue. Is it not proverbial of the good thoroughbred that he will ‘go till he drops’? This quality is, however, so intimately wrapped up with conformation, feeding and training, that it is impossible to separate them, and further, it must be considered to what extent what is called courage is due to instinct. There is no doubt that instinct is hereditary. Let us consider an outstanding example. The newly born cuckoo knows instinctively that his only chance of survival is to oust his foster brethren from the nest, and what amazing instinct the cuckoo mother displays over the production and rearing of her family! If, then, such complicated instincts can be transmitted, it is no stretch of imagination to assume that a simpler form of the instinct of self-preservation can also be inherited—the instinct of an animal, badly equipped by nature both for offence and defence, to seek safety in flight. To put this crudely and unpleasantly is to say that the horse, not realising his power, fears his rider to such an extent that he dare not stop or disobey. When we consider the weight and strength of a horse, the disadvantageous position of his rider and his slender means of control, it is clear that he must have some moral influence to take the place of the impossible physical domination.

The saddle horse has developed from a pure beast of burden. To save their legs, travellers, in olden times, would ride, and experience would teach them that certain horses were fleetier than others, some were sure-footed, some stumbled, and while endurance was a characteristic of one, another tired quickly or went lame. Then, as it would be borne in on the breeders’ intelligence and observation that in breeding ‘like tends to produce like’, they would mate only those animals that displayed the characteristics they associated with the desired qualities.

Further incentives to breed animals for special purposes (to consider the saddle only) would be supplied by the weight of a man in armour, which required a mount of cart-horse proportions, and in another direction, by the desire for speed and endurance to compete in races. The knight in armour soon dropped out, but racing steadily developed and became regularised, as betting—the mainstay of racing—increased.

As racing grew in popularity and importance, the attention of racing men was drawn to the advantage of breeding speedier animals,

and the Arab horse was the obvious 'cross' to suggest itself. Here was an animal bred in a direct line and without any cross from the wild horse and which for countless generations had been improved for saddle purposes and for nothing else. It is, moreover, the boast of the Arab breeders that it is the only breed of domestic animals that suffers no deterioration by in-breeding. At the same time, so potent is the Arab blood that once introduced in a strain it is never bred out, and its influence is so persistently recurrent as to be almost permanent.

But for a time the breeding of these racehorses, and our saddle horses generally, proceeded on haphazard lines, so that the record from the early days up till 1791 is of little value. Then in 1791, a Mr. Weatherby, Jun^r, published a book which was called *An Introduction to a General Stud Book*. This, with few exceptions, contains the pedigree of every horse and mare of note that had performed on the turf for the preceding fifty years, together with a short account of the most noted Arabians, Barbs, etc., imported for racing purposes. The information, originally collected for the author's amusement, and to 'rescue the turf from the increasing evil of false and inaccurate pedigrees', afterwards became the *General Stud Book*, still maintained and published by Messrs. Weatherby, and recognised not only by all authorities in the Empire, but also by every institution in the world interested in horses.

No horse can now be called thoroughbred unless it 'can be traced without flaw on both sire's and dam's side of its pedigree to horses and mares themselves already accepted in the earlier volumes of the book'.

So evolution, in what may be called the 'design' of the thoroughbred, proceeded from time immemorial with one aim and one only—to produce a horse to win races. An equally important consideration is that the horses so bred should remain sound to withstand the rigours of training and of a racing career generally.

Good conformation (*i.e.* good design) in a horse means the particular make, shape and action best suited to the task demanded and it owes its importance to the fact that any departure from the recognised standard increases the tendency to fatigue and makes for unsoundness when a horse is put to work. It may, in addition, cause him to be deficient in speed and uncomfortable to ride. The artist's conception is misleading because utility must be the sole guide.

As the horseman gains experience he is in a better position to decide why a horse has failed him and which of the various ailments and shortcomings that have appeared from time to time can be put down to faulty conformation, and what particular fault is responsible for each failure.

Foot rule, callipers and protractors not being applicable, a breeder, to be successful, must train his eye and not be satisfied merely with a

study of the prospective sire and dam, their ancestors, or even that of their progeny, but he must study their conformation so as to form an estimate of the value of points desirable and undesirable.

If, in addition, he has a working knowledge of mechanics and dynamics, so that he can appreciate the significance of leverage, angles, the incidence of weight and the effectiveness of good mechanical design generally, he will be a better judge of horseflesh.

It is, however, an interesting reflection that there has been a steady improvement apart from performance, as the thoroughbred has been slowly increasing in size and improving in conformation. So that performance has, after all, been a reliable guide to design, though the process of improvement would be speeded up if some dimensional record and description other than photography existed, as an accompaniment to the record of performance, man's life being short in comparison with the evolution of an effective number of generations of the horse.

This, then, is briefly the process by which the design of the thoroughbred is improved. Other saddle horses, the hunter and polo pony, can be considered together, as there are two societies working on parallel lines for the improvement of these types, notwithstanding that the thoroughbred is the type *par excellence* for all saddle purposes. They also are trying to build up a breed by the method that has produced the thoroughbred. Both Societies, however, recognise a system of inspection by which an animal considered suitable by duly appointed experts, may be entered in a register, and the progeny of such an animal, crossed with either a thoroughbred or an animal already in their stud book, becomes thoroughbred *of that particular breed*. It is a nice point for consideration whether this is the quickest and surest way of producing the desired type. Some breeders of polo ponies have abandoned, or are in process of abandoning, this method and are pinning their faith to thoroughbred parents, carefully selected not only for their make and shape but also for their height.

The only guide to raising stock is the principle that 'like tends to produce like', but unfortunately you can breed nothing from mongrels except mongrels, as there is always the predisposition for undesirable traits and faulty points of conformation of an ancestor, remote or recent, to appear in succeeding generations. With the thoroughbred we have generations of animals all more or less of a make, shape and action suitable for a saddle horse. If an animal of another strain is brought in, the breed will be contaminated by an ancestor that was bred for a purpose other than riding. All horses have a common ancestor; soil and environment account to some extent for the divergence in type, but artificial selection with different ends in view has been a still more potent factor.

In this connection it is interesting to reflect that if a group of Shire horses—a correct proportion of mares and stallions—were to be turned out in the Highlands they would, in the course of generations, revert to the Shetland pony in size and type. To obtain the reverse result, however, we should have to call to our aid artificial selection; but it would be simply a matter of time, scientific mating, feeding and climate to breed Shire horses from Shetland ponies.

Although the breed of the thoroughbred is established with one end in view, viz. to win races carrying light weights, nevertheless, now and then an animal emerges powerful enough to make a hunter up to weight. So if the *General Stud Book* were to open a Hunter section with big sturdy thoroughbred mares and stallions, not necessarily the most speedy, but with bone and substance—can anyone doubt that the stock raised from these animals would more quickly take on the characteristics of the weight-carrier *without losing the true riding type*? The danger of reverting to an undesirable ancestor—a danger ever present after a *mésalliance*—would, in this case, be almost negligible.

It is the same with the polo pony, only his activity and docility must be even greater; and we have also height to consider—because by a consensus of opinion 15 hands is the ideal. By breeding only from strains that have tended to produce small animals, breeders hope to solve the height question and a further consideration is that in this comparatively small animal the necessary agility has been found to be inherent.

It is an axiom in breeding that given a goal and singleness of purpose in striving for it, the requisite characteristics can be fostered by mating animals exhibiting these characteristics and by sterilizing all others.

It will be seen from the above that it is the conformation of the thoroughbred that has to be studied, and let me here emphasise the point that no pedigree is of any value unless it is confirmed by a stud book entry. Horses are sometimes described as 'by a thoroughbred out of a mare by a thoroughbred'. Such animals often look the part quite well and may make good hunters, hacks or polo ponies, but they will never reach the highest class. It is an interesting and useful accomplishment to be able to appreciate the fine shades of difference in conformation between the pure bred animal and his humbler relation.¹

¹See *An Eye for a Horse* by the same author.

CHAPTER IV

PRACTICAL HORSE BUYING

I am never tired of impressing upon my readers that the surest way to success is for a man to make himself enough of a horseman either to break a young horse for himself or at least to improve one till it suits his style of riding. But apart from not possessing the necessary skill there are many business and professional men who cannot spare the time for this expert breaking even if they had a school, manège or paddock available, and this chapter is written primarily for the man who wishes to buy a horse that knows his job, and that suits him.

No man can call himself an adept or a skilled horseman till he has sufficient confidence in his judgment to back his opinion by an actual purchase. The number of factors that go to make a man a judge, competent to buy successfully, are almost infinite. We have seen in Chapter III the importance of a knowledge of conformation: this is one factor, an important one, but nevertheless only a beginning. There is, as we have already seen, besides conformation, the question of the horse's temperament and that of the rider to be considered, singly and in conjunction with each other. The weight-carrying power of the horse, his capacity for speed, his height, age, and soundness are all important items to be judged. These, to a large extent, come under the head of conformation, but there is the further subtle factor of 'quality'; in plain English, how near is the animal to being a thoroughbred?

It used to be said that a man had to buy horses with every disability before he could call himself a judge. The whole of my writing is to avoid this expensive, discouraging method of 'trial and error'.

The main difficulty is that the horse dealer is a very astute man with great knowledge and experience and the buyer has often not a tenth part of his knowledge. This is a very uneconomic position, to say the least of it. If we apply this system of inexpert buying to a business career we cannot find a parallel. Before a man is entrusted with the buying he has to go through a long and tedious apprenticeship often lasting three or four years. Why, therefore, a man should think he can successfully buy a horse without a careful study of all the factors that make for success and, in addition, also market values, is a riddle to me. In addition, he should have ridden many first-class horses that suit him so that he may know what he can reasonably aim for.

In horse buying there are three animals to consider: the horse, the owner, and last but by no means least, the groom. The best horse in the world is of little use to a man if their temperaments clash. It is hardly likely that a horse that suits a fine horseman who means to get to the front of any Hunt, and perhaps have a shot at a Point-to-Point as well, will suit a man who is a beginner at the job. It is equally sure that a groom who is timid or bad-tempered—and the result of the two are often identical—cannot get on good terms with a highly strung, sensitive, well-bred horse. In either instance the misunderstanding increases when such contrasts in temperament come to react on each other. It often happens that a man complains that having bought a horse that doesn't suit him or his groom, he is faced with the annoyance of having to sell a failure; always difficult because the disappointed owner generally keeps the animal so long that its failure is well advertised among his friends, fellow members of his hunt or polo club.

It would, therefore, seem imperative that he should see his intended purchase in his own stable, but the purchase price should be agreed upon first.

Formerly it was well nigh impossible to get such a trial even if one were willing to pay for it, unless it were known that the intending purchaser had a conscientious groom, a skilful feeder, a quiet man in the stable and an alert, expert rider. Nowadays, keener competition has made dealers more accommodating, but it must often be a heart-breaking experience for them to see a good hunter steadily proving himself a failure during this trial, through inexpert riding and inefficient stable management. Nevertheless, it is sound advice that a buyer should get the best trial he can, and if this includes a day or two spent in his stable, so much the better.

There is no doubt that the ideal saddle horse is the thoroughbred, and the more weight he is up to the better. Anyway, want of breeding should rule a horse out of all consideration. In other words, he should be as like a thoroughbred in conformation and action as possible. It may be asked why not insist on a thoroughbred? The reason is that thoroughbreds are only bred for racing, which means that they are corn-fed from their earliest youth and tried for speed before they are two years' old. The result of these two factors is that they are so impetuous and hot that they cannot be toned down to have the temperate disposition necessary for hunting. An admixture of the blood—on the dam's side—of something not quite thoroughbred but as nearly so in appearance and action has two effects. First, it will ensure that the offspring will not be so highly strung, and secondly, as they are not suitable for racing they will have spent their youth until four years old most of the time at grass with just the interval for hacking and quiet



The new heads are galloped too young

riding. A horse that has thus spent his early youth on a diet suited to his years, and without the exciting experience of a trial for speed, will naturally be an animal of a calmer disposition. But as said before, a saddle horse must have breeding, not because it will necessarily have to go at racing pace, but because it will usually be galloping well within its powers when a less well-bred one will be going all out. It will be readily seen that such a horse will outlast an under-bred one, not only throughout a long day's hunting, or for three exacting chukkers in a polo match, but he will recover more quickly from such a day and, moreover, his working life will be longer.

Having finally made up one's mind regarding type and breeding, and having settled the price beyond which he does not want to go, a prudent buyer must be prepared to buy a horse whenever or wherever he sees it. That is the cheapest way, but he must have an experienced, appraising eye, and above all he must know the difficulties that waylay him. The best way, therefore, will be to describe a series of transactions of my own which can be classed as typical—a description of the accepted correct way of judging a horse being too lengthy for anything short of a complete book.¹

A visit to Dublin Show has a twofold object: there is the opportunity to study conformation and the chance of picking up a young hunter or polo pony. But in attempting the latter there are pitfalls. Although the Irish ideal is still 'Blood to carry weight' they have somewhat mixed the breed to get the extra bulk and bone that makes a horse *look* like a weight-carrier. *No pedigree unless it can be verified by a stud book reference is of any value.* The buyer, in addition, must be careful that he does not buy a spoiled horse, a rogue, under the impression that it is an unbroken one. He should not pay for his purchase until he gets delivery of it. Finally, he must take precautions that he does not, on its arrival, introduce what is known as the Dublin Show cough into his English stable.

Then there is no means of telling how the presence of hounds will react on a horse's temperament, as few of them have ever seen hounds.

On one of my visits I had tried and failed to come to terms over the purchase of an attractive chestnut gelding, and as the dealer who owned him had another he would like me to see, he asked me to visit him at his farm. As I had already bought two—actually one more than I wanted—I thought I was immune from further temptation; so it was with a light heart and in a purely critical frame of mind that I accepted the invitation and went with my hostess to his country place to spend an afternoon with him; but my mentor's absence of half an hour to pay a call in the neighbourhood was my undoing.

¹*An Eye for a Horse.*

A beautiful chestnut gelding was brought out for my inspection—not for me to buy, of course, but just for me to express an opinion. It was known that I had bought two, and that I did not want any more; but it was also known that I liked to see a really good one, and it would be interesting to hear whether my extremely critical eye could possibly detect a single flaw in the conformation of this paragon. He certainly was an attractive looking fellow, unbroken and scarcely even handled, thoroughbred, in the Book, and just under 15 h. or just over 14 h. 3 in., whichever I preferred. I doubted his height: a measuring stick was brought. ‘Yes, just under fifteen hands.’ It seemed only polite to ask the price. It was lower than I expected. I suggested a still lower one, so low that I wondered whether I ought to accompany it with an apology. There was a moment’s silence, and then: ‘Well, Major, it’s a long time since I sold you a horse. . . .’ Heavens! I would have to tell my hostess on her return that I had bought yet another.

Well, the deed was done. She did not move a muscle of her face when I told her, but for some reason my heart sank. Her only comment was to ask the price, and then what I got back ‘for luck’. I explained that this consideration had been omitted, and our dealer friend declared that the transaction as it stood, was in the nature of highway robbery (I being the Dick Turpin); and that a ‘luck penny’ would turn the scale till it became comparable only with ‘robbing one’s grandmother of her false teeth’. In face of this it would have embarrassed me to have carried the matter further, but it was out of my hands now, and in the end it was promised that a side of lamb should be sent to me. At tea he regaled us with local gossip and horse and cattle dealing reminiscences, told with a wealth of detail and a picturesqueness that baffles any attempt at reproduction. Moreover, I found it quite impossible to follow him through the ramifications of some of the transactions; but, as I gathered that the buyer in every case had some cause for dissatisfaction, I could not keep my mind from wandering off to my chestnut gelding. The first thing we did that evening was to look him up in the appropriate volume of the Stud Book. His dam that year had a bay filly by a sire quite different from the one given us.

A conversation on the telephone followed. The late owner nearly split the drum of my ear with objurgations against his unsatisfactory family, whose duty it seems was to keep these records, and who had given the wrong pedigree. ‘Sure, didn’t I buy him from the man who bred him and he on his last bed of sickness.’ Well, I cannot tell it in his own language, but I was given to understand that the pedigree was given with the breeder’s last breath; a man of the highest integrity who would scorn a lie, even when in robust health, but who, when face to face with dissolution, would be more truthful than the very truth it-

self. The correct pedigree should be sent to me without fail. I never got it.

The day after my return to England there was a message from the station that a package had arrived from Ireland, and 'would I please fetch it at once, immediately and without delay'. The reason for the urgency was clear to me as soon as I entered the parcels office and my 'luck penny' had to be buried quickly.

In due course the pony arrives. He looks big. I send for the standard: he is 15 h. 1 in.—an inch and a quarter over the height I like. Did he turn his toes out like that when I saw him?—but I remember he would not stand still enough for me to get a right look at him. I have him jogged out. The children want to call him 'Charlie Chaplin'. Well, he is mine, so we must make the best of it. His cough hangs on to him for six weeks; the whole stable catches it—in fact, it makes the round of every horse *twice*. Anyway the preliminary breaking seemed satisfactory. He tripped round in the long reins most gracefully and collectedly. I did not hurry him; but after about a week it seems absurd to prolong this part of his education, so, with due precautions, we mount him. He takes to this so calmly that satisfaction gives birth to the first breath of suspicion. He is a beautiful ride, quite handy. 'Get me a stick and ball,' I shout. I wave the stick, he takes no notice. I tap the ball and feel his heart go thump. I tap the ball again. Ten minutes later (although I am told it is really one) I have got him stopped, but I am very out of breath, and it is *my* heart that is thumping now. So I decide to sell him and send for a dealer who lives near me, a man who makes periodical visits to Ireland to replenish his stud. I am wondering what I shall tell him about the pony, but he takes the burden off me by recognising him at once as a well-known rogue with whom half-a-dozen experienced breakers have been unsuccessful. It seems he will stand one hit at the ball, but, after the second, the Phoenix Park is not big enough to hold him.

As said before, we never know when a suitable horse may come our way or under what peculiar conditions. One dull winter Sunday afternoon my young people suggested a visit to a local farmer. He was what is commonly known as 'a character' with something rather more than a local reputation, partly farmer, partly horse dealer and partly livery stable keeper, in addition to which he would for a small consideration risk his neck on other people's refractory hunters. But his most successful walk in life was piloting the girls and boys of the countryside and putting them in the way of riding to hounds creditably. The result was that he knew everybody and everybody's horse. The only thing was, what excuse could we make for such an invasion, for although tea after hunting was within the bounds of hospitality (and

Mrs. Joe's hospitality was proverbial), an invasion of five on a Sunday afternoon seemed too much of a good thing. We decided to think of some suitable reason during the drive and off we set.

As usual Mr. and Mrs. Joe gave us a hearty welcome, and as I shook hands, inspiration came. 'We've come over, Joe,' I said, 'to see that young horse a farmer has been hunting.' He looked puzzled enough and asked for details. 'Really, Joe,' I said, 'you surprise me. I thought you knew of every young horse in the countryside, and I hear there's a wonderful four-year-old in or near Westby.' His queries as to ownership, colour, age, sex, only brought the same reply from me: 'It's no use asking me, Joe; I came to you for information.'

All the way through tea Joe was distraught and evidently racking his brains, while every now and then he thumped the table with the remark: 'No, Colonel, you've got me beat, I can't place it.' I began to feel rather guilty for having puzzled and bothered him about an imaginary horse, and was just wondering how I could relieve his anxiety when Mrs. Joe, who was entertaining visitors of her own, came in with some hot water. To her Joe propounded his perplexity, and after some time spent in turning the matter over in her mind, she asked, 'Will it be Tom Harvey's chestnut mare?' With a mighty roar Joe announced that the mystery was solved. That was it, Tom Harvey's chestnut filly, four this time, just under sixteen hands, by the local King's Premium horse out of a thoroughbred hunter mare. It seemed she had been hunting and going well so far all season, and had even, at her tender age, taken a jumping prize at a local show. Harvey's farm was some two miles away, so Joe undertook to drive over with us after tea. He is only a little fellow, so we found room for him.

I am afraid we roused Tom Harvey out of his Sunday sleep. 'Do him good,' whispered Joe to me whilst I was apologising. The pony was driven from the paddock into the yard; one glance was enough as she trotted in, and I decided that if she could gallop as gracefully as she trotted, I would buy her. She had the saddle sweat marks on her still which was explained by the fact that she had hunted the day before. Poor filly!

While Harvey was giving me a show in the saddle my party said that not only must I buy her, but that it must be done quickly so that she should be removed without delay from surroundings of such hardship and neglect. However, a party of six, four of them transparent and enthusiastic optimists, is hardly calculated to bring off a horse deal with any chance of economy, and the owner, evidently impressed by our bevy, asked a prohibitive price. Not, it is true, with any show of optimism; but, anyway, it was so high that I did not see how I could decently offer the price I was prepared to pay.

There was only one course open. To the disgust of my young people, I thanked Harvey for the show, apologised again for disturbing his Sunday afternoon, and explained that although I liked the mare, our ideas of value seemed too far apart for there to be any hope of coming to terms. So I left matters in Joe's hands, telling him what I was prepared to pay and arranging that he was, so to speak, 'to keep the change'.

I got her all right, and although I never knew what was paid for her, Joe declared himself satisfied, and I can assure you I was. Of course, we decided that there was only one name for her under the circumstances, and 'Windfall' she was to her dying day.

Provided one is satisfied with the integrity and judgment of a buyer it is not a bad plan to entrust him with the buying of a horse. A man who is buying for someone else can always shelter himself behind the plea that he is acting for a client, and that he has in the first place to report, and in the second, that he has to make very sure, by means of an exhaustive trial, that the animal is suitable. There is, therefore, a certain advantage in being, so to speak, 'landed' with a horse, for the selection of which no one of the family is responsible and of which it is up to all to make the best. So one Christmas Day, hearing that a very careful friend of mine had, after an exhaustive trial, bought me a very promising hunter, I telephoned to him and said I would send for it next day.

I went to the cottage and imparted the news to my groom. He offered to fetch her at once, but I said that I should not dream of disturbing him, as not only was it snowing, but he was entertaining a Christmas party. However, he said he'd rather go there and then, if it was all the same to me, and besides, his party was *only his wife's relations*.

The mare did not seem to answer the description very accurately, and sure enough there was a message the next day that we had got the wrong one. However, I had ridden her by then and liked her, so I arranged that she should be my purchase and the other one also. So there I was with two weight-carrying hunters in the selection of which I had had no part. Both were successful—number one we sold almost immediately, but from the first day the other was my wife's favourite hunter and developed a personality more marked than any horse I have known, although in her first season she was terribly headstrong. She had her own ideas about most things, and if thwarted she would buck and plunge most expertly. She was, and has always been, a somewhat lethargic hack, and at exercise makes the impression of a conscientious athlete, walking and trotting with the express purpose of keeping fit, but on her exercising rounds in the lanes she welcomes any little varia-

tion to their monotony. At covert side she will stand very still, as if conserving her energy, but she always shows an awakened interest before the fox breaks and often before hounds even speak.

My wife would often make the remark, 'There's no fox here, look how bored the mare is,' and often she will edge towards a certain side of covert, and it will be safe to bet that a fox will break there. At the end of a run in which her rider had taken a successful line, there would have been one or more occasions when the mare decided whether to be placed left-handed or right at a check, and for which side of an intervening covert to make. If an attempt is made to thwart her in these decisions there may be a battle royal, or a marked loss of interest on the mare's part if she is taken out of her chosen line. Needless to say she is a fine jumper, and although she does not appear to be fast, she somehow makes it dead easy to see the whole of the fastest hunt.

On the few occasions that she has fallen she has waited patiently to be mounted, even when hounds were running and other horses streaming past. This gives one a pleasant feeling of co-operation, and makes one feel that keen as she is on a hunt, it would be no good to her without a rider. This companionship and feeling of mutual enjoyment is to my mind an important point in a good hunter.

When my son went to the 'Varsity his mother sent the mare up for him to hunt and she ran second in the college grind. He found that when she went with the drag, much of her keenness left her, it was not a fox-hunt and there was no chance of blood. Once, at a kill, her rider was given the brush, but was soon glad to get rid of it for someone else to carry, as the mare nearly went mad with excitement. One year we showed her in a heavyweight class; here again she seemed to realise what was wanted and rose to the occasion. All her lethargy left her and she braced herself up to a great effort, and we thought we had never seen her look so handsome. She was placed third out of twelve.

The period covering the time between the last day of polo and the first day of hunting is one fraught with danger to the horse lover. On the one hand he may be tempted to buy a polo pony and land himself with the expense of keeping him through the winter (no small consideration if well done), on the other hand he may fall in love with an unwanted hunter and no hounds to try him with. It was just at this season, one Saturday at the end of August, that I was induced to look at a show horse. A rapid calculation told me that if I bought him that very day he was eligible for a coming local show demanding a month's ownership, so making a sudden resolution I set about buying him.

My groom did not like him, he said he had a cunning face. I could see nothing wrong with the horse's expression, but my man would not change his mind. His pedigree indicated the high-sounding name of

'The Comet', but later the children christened him 'The Falling Star', which they seemed to think suited him better.

I took him out for a hack; in company he went well, but the return journey alone was a different story. He drifted about as aimlessly as a lost dog, although he cheered up when we got into the High Street of our market town and caught sight of his reflections in the shop windows. To these he neighed in a most companionable manner, making quite determined efforts to reach what he evidently thought were long-lost brothers. Our progress through the streets caused much amusement, and there were many disrespectful inquiries by telephone in the course of the afternoon.

He did not get a prize at the show, but he was placed fourth, and his 'reserve' ticket in the harness room is all that is left of him except a memory that, even at this long interval, is like a bad dream.

The only enthusiasm or sign of interest that he showed out cub-hunting was for repose. He stood stiller than any horse I have ever known. Perhaps, he too belonged to a trade union and had some complicated rules about maximum tasks and overtime. We might have called him 'Trades Unionist'.

I was the first member of the family to hunt him. He was much admired at the meet. He stood with his head well up and his ears cocked, but I soon discovered that whether he was facing covert or not, whether hounds spoke or whether they drew blank, he maintained the same wrapt expression, and I could only conclude he was admiring the scenery.

A fox broke and was hallo'ed away. I did not feel his heart beating a single pulse faster, and if I had not driven him forward he would have stood his ground for ever.

We set off, he galloped well, I steadied for his first jump; the way he came back on to his hocks left nothing to be desired and I approached the thorn hedge with confidence. He stopped dead with his chest touching the thorns. Thoroughly exasperated I was just going to turn him to have another try, when he jumped fiercely and unexpectedly. However, he only cleared in front and left his hind legs on the take-off side.

His weight crashed down the fence, and, gaining a foothold he managed to struggle clear. 'Have I staked my horse?' I called to a man on my right. 'No, you're all right.' So we went on through a gate on to the worst kind of tarmac with some oak park-palings on the other side. Too formidable an obstacle, and with such a chancy horse not to be thought of, so I decided to look for a gate, but 'The Comet' decided otherwise, and before I could stop him he took off from the slippery road without a falter and cleared the fence. I was in the act of looking

over my shoulder to call to my wife not to follow, when we dived into an obvious rabbit warren that no self-respecting hunter could fail to avoid, and came down. Although not hurt I was afraid he might be discouraged. Possibly he was, and possibly that accounted for the fact that when he galloped off he went in the *opposite direction to hounds and the field*. It is an experience ignominious enough to have to chase your horse when there is some hope of your friends catching him for you, but it was something new for me to find myself running the wrong way, and after a very few minutes of such a chase as I had, there was not the slightest sign of the hunt or anyone connected with it. A compassionate motorist stopped and gave me a lift. A mile down the road we heard that my 'mount' was in a farmyard, and here we found him being much admired by the farmer's home circle and being fed with sugar.

For the rest of the day, and during the succeeding days that I hunted him, my feelings alternated between a faint hope that he would eventually make a hunter and a murderous exasperation. He fell less often than might be expected, but he apparently had three ways of jumping. One: perfectly (this seldom); two: stopping dead after having convinced you that he was going to have it and then to jump after having convinced you that he was not (this was almost his normal style); three: charging the obstacle with the utmost gallantry but omitting the formality of rising at all (this took place only at specially selected places and usually ended in a fall). I sent him to the local horse-breaker and rough-rider with a full description of his vagaries. Two days later he telephoned to ask me to take him away. I asked why. 'Well,' he said, 'I generally get horses that I am afraid will kill *me*, but with your beauty I am afraid I shall be tempted to kill *him*.' I asked him to try him out hunting, but he declined without thanks.

There was another and not unimportant side to my difficulty. The ingenuity displayed by the family in finding excuses for not riding him was slowly but surely impairing their moral fibre, and I believe I should have got rid of him at any price if I had not thought it bad for my groom to prove himself in the right.

But my luck was to turn. A veterinary surgeon asked me whether I could guarantee my chestnut horse quiet with hounds. I said I could, but I felt it my duty to add that I could also guarantee him not to jump when wanted, and that, although fast, I could further guarantee that however slow the hunt, he would never get to the front. I had to turn my head away to conceal what the Victorian novels call the 'joy light in my eyes' when the answer came. 'That's just what I'm looking for.' It turned out that his client had taken a fancy to 'The Comet' one day when he was following in his motor car, and only wanted to ride about the lanes. He was to be examined the next morning. On the way to the

stables I said to the children, who came out to see the last of him, 'He's never been sick or sorry since he came, but it would be just like him to pull out lame this morning.' He did it all right, lame as a crutch, and I do not know which was the more crestfallen, my groom or I; the family yelled with laughter. However, the veterinary surgeon took a lenient view and said he would come again in a week, and then if sound and I would give him a warranty he would accept him. All went well, or I think I should have shot him. I saw him a year later. He still looked very statuesque with his new owner at covert side, and we met occasionally in the lanes, where I saw him standing like a rock, entirely unmoved, while the hunt swept past. I hear he became the apple of his owner's eye, and that £300 wouldn't have bought him.

Another summer purchase and again with no hounds to try her with, was Mary Rose, a bay thoroughbred mare, six years old, as pleasant a hack as a man could wish for, and a neat and temperate jumper in cold blood. Her first day's hunting was a late cubbing meet. She stood quietly enough until hounds came out of covert near to her, and then she went mad. As she had been well schooled I was able to restrain her, or I don't know where she would have taken me.

I was puzzled! She broke out into a sweat and evinced the greatest excitement, and I foresaw a tearaway ride if we should get a run. However, I was wrong. I got a bad start, but the mare went beautifully and took her fences in good style; but when hounds checked I found I could not get her within a field of them. When they swung my way she turned tail and galloped in the opposite direction in spite of anything I could do. I was soon thrown out, and once away from the pack she became her placid self again and in five minutes was as dry as a bone.

This was something outside my experience, so I sent her to the local horse-breaker. After a couple of hunts he advised me to sell her, as he considered her dangerous. He, too, found that at the approach of hounds she lost her self-control and became quite unaccountable. He told me that a neighbouring dealer was prepared to give a good price for her if he found that he could ride her with hounds. I was out with them the day of the trial. There was a very big field and I only saw him occasionally, bowling along well away from the pack and having no trouble at all. At the first check I saw him wink at my horse-breaking friend and stick his thumbs up after the manner of our Tommies when they wish to convey that they are on a good thing. My hopes ran high! Alas! hounds were cast his way, and as they came through the gate from the next field the mare positively galloped backwards and finished up in a ditch, in which she sat, putting her rider over her tail. The deal, of course, was off, and I ultimately took a wickedly low price from a riding school in a neighbouring town, which, being situated

far away from the country, did not give her any chance of meeting hounds.

The next time I saw her was on the stage in *The Arcadians*, a touring theatrical company having hired the quietest animal they could hear of, to take the part of the racehorse in that play. The riding master at the school told me she was most reliable and the pleasantest hack on which he had ever put a beginner.

She was sold from there to a well-known hard rider in a Yorkshire stone wall country, and I believe eventually he was able to send her along in a hunt, but it was always a hazardous adventure, and she never got over her antipathy to hounds. She came to have a pair of very big knees, contracted on those occasions when, as her new owner puts it, 'Mary didn't rise.' She ran well, and was placed in a Point-to-Point.



Well-mannered Hacks.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW HORSE

The difference between success and failure is so often dependent on apparently trifling items of treatment that it behoves the buyer to extract all the information possible from the horse's late owner, and then to follow minutely his instruction. This refers principally to feeding, biting, shoeing, clipping and clothing, instruction comparatively easy to follow. Not so easy is it to accommodate one's riding to the new purchase.

In a previous chapter it has been shown that over-freshness in a horse is the most fruitful source of failure. Another adverse circumstance that runs it very close in importance is the folly of hunting a horse or playing a new pony before getting on terms with him and before the animal has become accustomed to his new owner and to his new surroundings.

The trial we are able to get is often meagre, sometimes indeed we have to be content with what we can see of him in a hunt or in a game or even with what we hear of his performance. With luck, a trial is possible; and it has even fallen to my lot to be able to hire a horse for half a season, with the option of purchase at any time. Somewhere between the extremes of these various conditions lies the point at which we have to make up our mind whether we buy the horse or not.

It must be realised that the seller only too often represents the horse he is selling as perfection and then after the bargain is struck it would be somewhat invidious to begin to talk of the precautions it has been found necessary to take in feeding, exercising, biting, etc. Nevertheless, there is nearly always something about which the new owner should be warned. The buyer is often as much to blame, assuming that he will in course of time find out for himself how the horse should be bitted, the amount of corn that is the best ration, and how much exercise his legs will stand. Are there sights and sounds on the high road to which he objects? Does he 'go kindly' in all circumstances?—in fact, there are a hundred and one items of information it would be useful to know. Even a trial with hounds does not reveal everything, although it must be borne in mind that any adverse circumstance noticed in a trial tends to become exaggerated. It is within the experience of every horse-

man that difficulties that arise after purchase were indicated, perhaps only to a very slight degree, during the ride before purchase. Possibly the only trial we have had is in a dealer's paddock, and the horse has shown a tendency to hang towards the gate leading to the stable. This tendency may develop later into very marked nappiness and home sickness. But it is no use multiplying examples, which are infinite.

Horses imported from Ireland require a special word of warning. It is a long, tedious and often hazardous process to acclimatise them.

The only way to account for this is the exceptionally mild, damp climate of Ireland, the lush grass, the neglect from which most young horses suffer in the first four years, and the irrational and unsuitable feeding when they are at last brought into the stable. I remember once being in the throes of a 'deal' with an Irish farmer, when it looked odds against our coming to terms, and he was trying to persuade me what an exceptional animal we were discussing. He said he had never bred or owned a better, or one of which he was fonder. 'I *love* the animal,' he said, and then he naively and triumphantly added, 'Why, I give him corn!' We have, therefore, not only to get the young horse's frame and constitution attuned to the English climate, but also gradually to prepare his digestive organs for more nourishing, and later, more stimulating food. But even with this explanation the delay is difficult to account for.

During the War we imported horses and mules from Australia, the U.S.A., Canada, Argentine, India and Spain, but none were so difficult as those from Ireland, or took so long to get into working condition. So it seems that delay is inevitable with these Irish horses, and even with the expenditure of time and the greatest care it is difficult to avoid catarrh, 'filled' legs, splints and other exostoses during their first year in this country.

The horse will arrive exhausted from his journey; his temperature should be taken at once and if it is 101° he should be treated as a sick horse, and if 102° or over, a veterinary surgeon should be called in. Anyway, for the first forty-eight hours bran mashes and hay without a single oat will be the safest diet, and a walk of about ten minutes on the second day is quite enough exercise. Then, if the horse is not coughing, and seems well, and providing his temperature is normal, his molars should be examined and rasped if necessary, and physic ball should be given. These precautions will delay the start of serious work for ten days or so, but it will be time gained in the long run, for it is the surest possible way to avoid more serious trouble later.

When the horse is over his physic, work suitable to his condition, age and experience can begin, but oats should be given very sparingly at first; a mere handful in each of his feeds is enough, and this should

only be increased gradually. He should next be given walking exercise for a fortnight, beginning with half an hour and increasing gradually to two hours. Then, if he has stood this well and if he appears to thrive on it, the pace can be increased to a trot and his general education can begin.

If he has been bought from an Irish dealer, say in August or September, and appears in fair condition, it is wise even under these circumstances not to vary the procedure as laid down above, for the first fortnight. It would be a matter of luck if the horse could be got into condition for a full day's hunting before Christmas, and the chances of this would be *increased* if we start out with the determination gradually to prepare him for his first quite short day on Boxing Day and not earlier. If he has a robust constitution and takes to his new diet, the different climate, and altered conditions generally, we may find him fit a week or a fortnight earlier, but it is impossible to stress too strongly the importance of prolonging rather than curtailing this period of preparation.

It is a common experience among hunting men that Irish horses are no good in their first season, and that the whole of the first winter, followed by a summer at grass and a second preparation, has to elapse, and there is no doubt that this distressing delay is caused in nine cases out of ten by undue haste at the beginning.

The new owner should, above all things, resist the temptation of trying his new purchase immediately after its arrival. It is a great temptation to see whether he pleases at home as well as he did when he was tried on the other side, or it may be that one wants to 'give a show' to the home circle, and it is even possible that he has been bought for us and that he is seen for the first time on his arrival. But there is a risk in departing one iota from the course of treatment laid down.

With every purchase the new owner should start out with the determination to make it a success. That is essential, but not so universal as one would believe. With this end in view he should take minute notes of the method of feeding and the amount of exercise not only on hunting and polo days, but on the off days also. With food and exercise there are third and fourth parties to the transaction—the two grooms ought, if possible, to confer. I dealt with this matter in 'Freshness and Failure' and I will be content here to remind my readers that most owners have to rely implicitly on the judgment of their grooms in the vital matter of feeding.

With a polo pony there is the change in the pony's surroundings to be taken into consideration. It is one thing to play polo at a quiet country club and quite a different thing to play at a fashionable ground with a concourse of spectators, grandstands, bunting and perhaps a band of music.

I once sold a pony to play in London and the day before she was despatched there was a Maypole festival on the village green just outside her stable. The music upset her to such an extent that she went round and round her box in a state of great agitation, so that it took my groom till nearly midnight to get her calm and dry. I was able to warn her new owner, who took the precaution to have her on the polo ground every day for a week before playing her so as to get her used to music and the other unfamiliar sights and sounds. I am convinced one failure was thereby averted.

Of course, it goes without saying that the bit in which a satisfactory trial was made should be copied exactly. It is a mistake to use the nearest pattern one can find in the saddle room, it must be exact. If, later, the new owner, after taking into consideration the difference between his hands and those of the man from whom he has bought, thinks he can improve upon it, let him by all means make some further experiments, but he should begin with the bit to which the pony is accustomed and he should give the late owner credit for having selected the most suitable for his hands in conjunction with the horse's mouth. He may find that he uses his legs more and that he can do with a milder bit, and on the contrary he may be a weaker rider and require something more severe.

I am often asked the impossible question, what is my favourite bit; indeed it makes me sick at heart to be asked by a prospective buyer if he may try a pony in a bit of his own choosing. My reply invariably is that as long as the horse is mine he must be ridden in the bit I have selected. When I am selling I always try to include a horse's bridle in the bargain, because I realise the absurd reluctance of buyers to add a pound or two for a new bit to the hundreds spent on a good horse.

The vagaries of even high class horses are many. Indeed it would not be wrong to say of a hunter or polo pony that the better bred he is the more highly strung he will be and the more susceptible to his surroundings. One of my playing ponies refused to face the coloured polo balls used in a Gymkhana event. Another remained to the end of her long playing career suspicious of shadows thrown in bright sunlight.

Some horses share with their riders the peculiarity of suffering from what we used to call, at school, 'match fever'—that state of high nervous tension that disappears as soon as the ball is thrown in or after hounds have found and the first fence is successfully cleared. This manifests itself in many ways, restlessness at covert side, a tendency to refuse the first fence. Some ponies will be difficult to mount, some will half rear as the ball is thrown in or show reluctance to face the start of a game.

Nearly all ponies vary in what is required before the game, to bring

them to a suitable frame of mind to play polo. Some of the more placid ones require nothing more than a walk, others a vigorous gallop up and down the ground with a strong pull up on their hocks a few times, others the few minutes with stick and ball that most players find necessary to 'get their eye in'. The new owner should try to find out all these peculiarities.

In reply to a man who once bought a pony from me, I said that beyond occasionally jumping over the sheep hurdles that bounded my manège she had no vices or peculiarities. But this was one of her vagaries: the confines of the manège meant nothing to her and hardly helped me in her schooling because if unchecked, or if I omitted to turn her, she would quite calmly, and as she thought loyally, carry on in the direction she was facing and jump out. He wrote to me some time later that although I had mentioned this peculiarity it had hardly prepared him for what happened the first time he played her before a crowd, when she had with equal calmness jumped the first row of seated spectators.

I was once a member of a visiting team and noticing that at one corner of the ground a canvas screen had been erected I decided to take the precaution of showing it to my ponies one by one before the game. Unfortunately, as I approached it with my most highly strung pony a grimy collier stuck his face through a hole in the canvas. This so startled her that all through the two chukkers I played her it was never quite absent from her mind, even in the remotest corners of the field, while whenever play went in that direction she displayed a definite reluctance to face it.

As hunting is a more strenuous affair a horse is not so likely to persist in restlessness. Further, there is a routine in polo that makes one game very like another so that the pony comes to expect full speed as soon as the ball is thrown in, and this tension is kept up for eight minutes. In hunting, every day is different and there is much hacking and standing about. Even when hounds find, no two hunts are alike either in speed or in the country to be crossed. Nevertheless, some hunters do not seem to settle down until they have hunted several seasons. At a meet or at a check one quite often sees a horse walking round and round a dismounted rider, while he passes the reins behind his back so that he at anyrate can stand still. One must assume that such horses must be exceptional performers for a man to put up with such vagaries.

These are a few anecdotes, drawn from my experience, typical of the difficulties with which one has to contend in getting used to a new horse and accustoming him to new conditions and surroundings and ourselves to the new purchase. Most riders will be able to recall experiences of similar difficulties, which must be overcome if we are to make

every new horse an immediate success. Apart from the obvious personal advantage of this, it is a buyer's bounden duty to put the new purchase through a course of training, short or long. Not because it has been badly schooled but because there are probably points in the new owner's particular style of riding which the horse had not been taught to appreciate. This is easier than altering one's method of riding to conform to that of his late owner.

Even after giving the purchaser the best advice, there is no way of making him follow it and so diminish the risk of failure. These failures may be temporary, but there is a grave risk of permanent impairment of manners and performance. Every peculiarity that is known should be mentioned by the seller and remembered by the buyer. For instance, some ponies play their second chukker better than the first and vice versa, some sound, hard-bitten ponies only reach their full polo playing powers in their third chukker. Again, it may be noted that occasionally a pony tends to lose his mouth towards the end of a chukker, which may call for a readjustment of the reins so as to bear more on the curb, or perhaps the reverse, on the snaffle. Even first-class ponies have their vagaries, and if one knows what they are beforehand one is saved from groping in the dark for them and for their remedy.

With the hunter a trial with hounds should tell us much, but it is important to avoid differences of opinion between mount and man, and this liaison between the old and the new owner is one certain way of diminishing this risk of misunderstanding and the consequent failure.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

THE DURATION OF A COURSE OF SCHOOLING

It is impossible to estimate the time needed to school a horse, and any attempt to do so would be misleading. There are so many factors to be considered. The breaker's skill and knowledge of his job come first. Then there is the variation in horses' temperaments no less than the facilities available. Lastly there is a great element of luck. Unconsidered trifles may retard breaking—some of them outside the breaker's control—such as untoward happenings in the stable or at exercise.

For whatever purpose a horse is ultimately to be used it is a mistake to neglect the general education that should precede the special education for any particular job. A hack will have to be familiarised with the sights and sounds of the high road, a hunter will have to be taken out hunting and taught to jump, besides the hundred and one things incidental to his career, and a pony will have to learn polo. None of these specialities can be taught until a horse is obedient to the aids.

It may be helpful to set down my experience in general, and then in such detail as can be furnished by actual experience.

Many of the examples chosen, it will be noticed, are of polo ponies, for the simple reason that their training is the highest a horse can get. The man who is breaking a hack or a hunter must decide for himself how far he wants to go with the horse's general education; it will depend on his capabilities as a rider no less than on the horse's conformation, breeding and temperament.

I will describe quite briefly a few typical cases. Among them will be the shortest and easiest course that I can remember, and the longest and most difficult; another which I can characterise as a normal course from the three-year-old to the finished article; one which appeared for a long time to be a failure, but which through perseverance turned out to be a success; and another where breaking proceeded on the easiest and simplest lines and produced in the end a useless animal.

With the hunter I have this to emphasize:

we have to start with the idea that he is born rather than made, so that a failure should be more quickly apparent.

It is no use persevering when our better judgment tells us that we have started on unsuitable material. I can recall many instances where I have wasted my time and energy—often from a sense of false pride—the result of having been told that I should not succeed. It requires strength of mind to make this decision, more so to-day than formerly, because there is no sale for a bad horse. There used to be *some* job that could be found for him, if it were only in an omnibus or tram. I can remember very vividly what I may call a typical instance of misdirected perseverance.

One morning there rode into my yard a farrier-sergeant of Yeomanry, on a small blood-horse which he wanted to sell. As I had at the time a horse that was a failure as a hunter (his idea of jumping was to take every fence by the roots), and as it was only a charger that was wanted, I proposed an exchange. The visitor tried my horse and I tried his, both passed the test satisfactorily, and with a certain sum to boot from me (it is ever thus) he rode off with my horse, and I was left with his.

The next morning my new purchase had to go into town to be entrained for camp. The special train had to be kept waiting half-an-hour for him. Finally he arrived with a very exhausted groom. It seems the brute had dodged up every side street—and there were many—had drifted about the road neighing like a lost soul, had jibbed and reared, swung round, and, indeed, committed every atrocity known in the equine world.

It can be imagined that I did not look forward to my first ride. In strange country he did not make such a bad start, but as he got to know his way about he would try to nap for home every few minutes. I got to hate the sight of him, still more riding him, but with the enthusiasm (and vanity) of youth I persevered. I gave him to be tried as centre in

one of the guns but the cunning rogue would not pull an ounce. The end came one day on a route march, when he reared and wheeled round with me, coming down upon the water-cart horse and bringing him down with him. No one was damaged, but I decided, or rather my major decided for me, to gratify the 'I told you so's' and not to ride him again.

I took the trouble to trace him to the ignoble end which I felt sure was in store for him. I sold him to the local Carriage and Tramway Company for £25, on condition that they asked me no questions and expected no virtues except his obvious good looks.

Later I had the curiosity to ask the yard foreman how they had got on with him. He told me they had begun with him in a hansom cab, but he had reared over backwards into that. As one of a pair he had also 'downed tools' and refused to move a yard, and had thrown himself down. Two men with broomsticks had failed to make him rise so they had turned the fire hose on him. His next trial was centre horse in one of their three-horse buses (they drove three abreast). He allowed himself to be dragged a quarter of a mile by his two companions, without having put one foot in front of another, sliding the whole way. Then he again threw himself down, and broke a pole. That, said the yard foreman, had been their last attempt. 'What finally became of him?' I asked. It appeared that at the time the remount buyers were scouring the town for horses, and my beauty was the first animal in the huge stable to catch their eye.

However, I had no intention of letting the matter stop there, so I traced him to his depot, and warned the C.O. of the unit of Yeomanry to which he was posted, to be careful. He promised to keep me informed. The troop-commander to whom he was issued, somewhat of a wag, wrote from South Africa. 'Your horse has done his bit at last. We have been captured by de Wet so often that we have earned the title of "de Wet's own", and last time he said that if we didn't have better horses "He'd be damned if he'd let us go next time". The only one he liked was your bay, and as he commandeered that for himself I hope he breaks his neck.'

I think the original farrier-sergeant must have had bad hands, because I heard that the horse he got from me had also got into the way of rearing and had fallen on him, a stroke of poetic justice.

If a correct scientific course of breaking is followed, the average time required to school a pony or a hunter, rising five, is three

months, after which it should be ready to play slow polo or take its place in an educational hunt. This estimate is based on the assumption that the animal is in condition, sound, of suitable conformation, and a straight mover. I further assume that it has been backed and is a pleasant straightforward hack.

An older horse will take longer, especially if there is some fault of mouth or carriage to correct. An untried polo pony will benefit by half a season's hunting with a light weight, and be an easier animal to school. A young hunter will be the better for a summer's hacking interspersed with his school work. For the second half of the hunting season the pony should be rested. A pony that has played a season should be rested at grass for the greater part of the winter, and should not be hunted at all unless it has shown some definite objection to polo; in this case a season's hunting might have the effect of settling his mind and bringing him to his senses.

When estimating the time necessary to break certain horses there are many considerations, and it will pay to give them all unprejudiced thought, not only singly, but each in conjunction with the other, and also comprehensively as a whole. It is no exaggeration to say that it is necessary to spend more time in thought and in the attempt to fathom each horse's mentality than actually on his back.

The points for consideration, and their solutions, are not as self-evident as they may seem at first sight.

As stated before, the subject must be approached from different angles. There is, in the first place, the total time from the handling of the three- or four-year-old until his creditable appearance in a run with hounds or in a game of polo. There is, in the second place, the duration of each lesson.

The total time does not vary between the hunter and the polo pony. Assuming that the education of both begins as the horse approaches his fourth year, the ideal age, they will, on the average, begin to be reliable hunters or polo ponies suitable for the average rider in their fifth year, and reach the height of their powers in their seventh. Then, with luck, they should retain their form and freshness for another five or six years, a polo pony probably longer.

It must be remembered that this is only generalising, and exceptional cases of early maturity, no less than examples of very slow progress, may come within the experiences of

my readers. Then, again, there may be instances of horses and ponies retaining their brilliance to a far greater age than twelve or thirteen, but broadly speaking, my figures can be taken as a reliable guide.

A further consideration in this connection is, how quickly can we proceed at first; are we wise to press forward education at the early stages and to ease off as the animal matures; or should we begin gradually, intensifying instruction later? Here our best guide is a comparison with man.

A man is mature at twenty-one, a horse at seven. In both instances dentition is complete at these respective ages, and both can be said to become adult. It is therefore a good guide to multiply the age of a horse by three to arrive at the corresponding age of a man.

In deciding how we should proceed with a horse's education we must consider the physical condition of our pupil in exactly the same way as we should that of a boy. Many boys nearing their twelfth year will be in a school class or playing games with others of a much higher age. It may well be that the boy is selected to play in a football team composed of the oldest boys of the school, and in physique and size he may be well up to their standard. In these circumstances it would be absurd for him to be playing with his contemporaries, or to keep him in a class less developed mentally. And so it is with the horse. His early life may be such that he is very mature by the time he is three years old, which means that his schooling can not only begin earlier, but can be pushed further forward than that of a three-year-old that has spent his early youth in less favourable circumstances.

A good example in this connection is the racehorse; he is corn fed from his earliest youth and races when he is two and a half years old.

Another example is the polo-bred polo pony. Here the predominant factor is generally the show ring instead of racing. No exhibitor would stand a chance in the show ring in the yearling, two-year or three-year-old classes unless he has artificially fed and handled his youngsters; while as four-year-olds, as early in the year as March, they are tested in the saddle nearly as severely as older played ponies.¹

Most chance bred ponies bought from farmers, both here and in Ireland, are not as advanced either in their physical or mental condition at five years as these carefully nurtured

children of luxury are at three. Greater care must be taken with immature five-year-olds than with the more advanced ponies of three or rising four-year-old. This extra care must take the form of physical training as apart from schooling, and the preparation of their system for corn feeding. All this must be gently progressive, so that lights are avoided; and even at exercise care must be taken to prevent the pupil adopting a slovenly carriage of the head and neck—or the result will be splints, spavins and curbs. It may even be impossible to restore the balance lost by an incorrect flexion.

Breaking means not only establishing a means of communication between horse and rider, but has also, for another and hardly even secondary object, the physical training to enable it to carry out its rider's wishes without undue fatigue and without injury. These two objects must be achieved simultaneously. But this does not mean that both will be attained by the same set of exercises; on the contrary, they must be entirely different.

Establishing a means of communication is like teaching a language. Every movement of the rider's hand and leg must come in time to have a definite meaning, so in the course of instruction it will be useless to do anything with hand and leg that is not understandable. Indeed, it will be worse than useless, for it will be mere nonsense with no object and no meaning, so that confusion will be the only result.

To obtain the necessary *physical* condition a set of exercises is called for, quite different from those on the educational side. If we try to mix the two, failure is certain; not necessarily complete failure, but, in the best circumstances, such delay as to make breaking unremunerative, and in the worst case a soured, vicious and useless animal.

Let us consider these points with an analogy before us more obvious and more universally understood. The army recruit has to be trained to handle his weapons and to move with precision, and later to march long distances carrying heavy marching order.

There have been in the army within my recollection various systems of physical training amended from time to time, some of them abandoned and others substituted, but never has it been advocated that rifle practice, sword exercise or route marching are the best preliminary preparations for endurance.

Scientifically thought-out systems of physical training have been devised to give the re-

¹ Latterly there has been a protest against this by breeders, who object to their immature youngsters being ridden by the judges.

cruit the necessary poise and muscular development, to give him activity, balance, and strength to enable him to take his place in the ranks creditably, and to march long distances with kit and accoutrements and to handle his weapons with ease and smooth precision.

I have discussed the matter with a trainer of one of our leading football teams, and here again the routine of training is something quite different from playing football, and consists partly of exercises calculated to develop quickness and agility individually—something quite apart from playing practice and all directed towards attaining physical fitness and activity.

So it is accepted theory that lessons should be separated from physical training until such time as physical well-being is so far established and education so far advanced that they can run concurrently. The horse will then be in the requisite mental and physical state to go hunting or into a game of polo.

It should also be remembered in this analogy: with the human being we have a pupil anxious to excel, with much understanding; with the horse a pupil with a great love of ease, impatient of control, slow of perception, and with whom it is difficult to establish communication.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to postpone instruction entirely until the horse is fit, for then his powers of resistance would be greatly increased. There are plenty of early lessons we can give to establish this communication, and which will help to convince him of our mastery, without taxing his strength or understanding and without running the risk of injury to his limbs, joints, and, above all, to the bars of his mouth. If, as said before, education does not begin until he is mature or in hard condition he will be more muscular and 'full of himself', bit indications will have to be more marked, and there is a distinct risk of impairing the sensitiveness of the bars of the mouth with all the pulling about to which we should be compelled to resort.

This is where the necessity for thought comes in. There will be certain obvious signs that we are going too fast, such as the following. Filled legs are probably an indication that food is in excess of what is warranted by work. Brushing shows that we are demanding exercises too difficult, having regard to his physical fitness. Bruised bars and sore lips call for a complete cessation from work, except exercise by leading or lunging in a cavesson with no bit in the mouth; and, finally, unreasonable resistance will show that

we are overtaxing his understanding by proceeding too fast.

These contretemps prolong breaking, and the way to avoid them is to appreciate that they occur through a mistaken idea that to lengthen a lesson shortens the period of breaking. Interruption to lessons through sore places and other injury, actual or threatened, is the most usual cause of a waste of time.

EXAMPLES

'F—— D——'

A grey pony mare, five years, 14.3½, quiet to ride. A low wither made her look thick through the shoulder, but she was a naturally balanced pony and surprisingly fast. She had a week of long reins, about a fortnight in the school, two days of stick and ball, and went straight into fast polo. She was sold at the end of her first season, after an exhaustive trial, as a made pony. Her only fault (if it could be called a fault) was that she jumped into her stride with such energy that her rider, if not careful, was thrown back in the saddle, and was then liable to catch her in the mouth, which had a tendency to make her bound; but she was, nevertheless, the pleasantest, staunchest pony that I ever rode.

'D——'

A heavyweight mare, 14.3½, five years, just backed, a very fine galloper. The bend of her neck came a little too far back, but with the optimism of youth I made up my mind I could cure her. In the long reins, with the bearing rein, her carriage was of course perfect, but towards the end of a chukker she always came to be heavy in hand. She had a fortnight in the long reins and three weeks in the riding school. She then threw out a splint and had to be rested six weeks. After this she had another week of long reins and a week in the school, by way of a refresher, followed by a fortnight's stick and ball and fast work in the open. She played polo (at her own pace) for a couple of months, but required a constant change of bit. After this she was tried in a match by the man who bought her. In the course of one chukker she had a collision with another pony. Her rider hit out from behind, followed up at full gallop and crashed head on into the pony of an opponent who was trying to meet the ball. This did not affect her at all, and she never showed any fear. She played many years and then was used as a brood mare.

‘S—’

A grey gelding, 15 hands, seven years, bought at the Army dispersal sales at Ormskirk. This pony took two years to school, but I will admit that he suffered from a brain disease (megrim) which used to attack him when he resisted. His great pace and dash, perfect carriage and balance, encouraged me to persevere. He had a week in the long reins, a fortnight in the school, and from the very first took no notice of stick or ball—probably he had already been so far schooled. As this pony was bought in the autumn, and there was no chance of polo until the spring, we hacked him throughout the winter. It was during these rides that he would be seized with violent paroxysms, and I have often known him, in the course of one of them, gallop sideways for half a mile along the road, resisting every effort to straighten him. It was a nerve-racking experience, but by the time polo began he was well schooled. Nearly all this schooling took place on the grass at the side of the road, there being no paddock available at the time. (I recommend this with ponies that do not take kindly to work in the paddock.) He learned to stop and start off again, and whenever I came to a place sufficiently wide I made him jump round. It took me two months of regular play to find a bit for him and the correct length of martingale. By the end of the season he was playing fairly well, but his impetuosity did not encourage me to let him right out. The following season, after a winter at grass, he seemed more temperate, and before the end of his second season he was playing in matches and made a name for himself. He was one of the ponies selected to play in the international matches in 1924, but unfortunately he broke down and had to be fired. None of my friends thought I could break him, but they admitted that if I could he would reach top class.

‘Miss Buck’

Polo bred, 15 hands 1 inch, given to me unbroken as a three-year-old by the breeder. I got her in the autumn, and as she was so mature and had such wonderful limbs and straight action I proceeded at once with ordinary breaking. She developed amazing powers. She had a fortnight in long reins, three weeks in the school and three weeks fast work in the open, stick and ball occupying only about three half hours. Unfortunately, wet weather prevented us from starting polo at the expected date and by the time we did be-

gin the club was playing full speed. She was playing really good and fast polo at the end of July in her four-year-old year, and got a double first at the National Pony Society's Show in the following March. However, she was not schooled on lines to suit the judges, who did not make too good a hand of riding her, and she was only reserve for the championship. After carrying me for three seasons she was sold at Tattersall's. She was sound and unblemished and her legs were as clean as the day she was foaled.

Her new owner took her to America and lent her to the English team for both international matches in 1927, after which she was sold at auction for \$7100 and then played for America in all *their* international matches.

Describing the goal which gave the United States the victory in the first of the international matches, against Argentina, Mr. J. C. Cooley, wrote in *Town and Country* (New York): ‘In the seventh chukker Mr. Nelson scored at the south end, tying the score at six all, and the teams came out for the eighth chukker all even, and everybody on the stands under those grey and mournful skies was simply staggering with excitement. And then in the eighth came the end, and the United States won as hard a match as they have ever played, and to Mr. Harriman and his bay mare, Miss Buck, came a fame that will always be theirs in the history of polo. For the third time Miss Buck came out on the ground, and if she was a tired mare she never showed it. The eighth period started, and after a few tremendous minutes Mr. Stevenson, again riding Mr. Sanford's bay mare Shamrock, backed the ball in the centre of the field, not far from the boards on the west side and right in front of the clubhouse. No play could have been more dramatically staged. The ball was hit, and like a flash Mr. Harriman on Miss Buck wheeled inside Mr. Mills on the bay mare Aurora, and like a shot Miss Buck was on her way following the swallows down south. Like a swallow the bay mare went in her flight, and in that flight Aurora could not follow. Mr. Harriman hit the ball down the centre of the field, and racing away from interference he got to the ball again and scored the goal that again put the United States in the lead, with scant time left to go. In those last few minutes Argentina attacked with undaunted courage, and twice it seemed as if Mr. Kenny must score. But the tale stands that he didn't, and victory came to the United States with that utterly satisfactory goal of Mr. Harriman's, the last goal of

the day. And so the story of the scoring ends, as it had begun, with the victorious effort of a most persistent and painstaking player, and the speed and courage of the bay mare.'

'E——'

A thoroughbred brown mare, seven years old. She had been schooled by a young soldier, but had not been played. I never got her to change her hind legs when turning and I never got the correct direct flexion. As far as I could tell it was a *physical* impossibility for her to bend her neck at the poll. A spell of schooling nearly always ended in her jibbing, and to play her was a precarious affair because of her failure to change her legs. She had eight weeks schooling, sometimes in the long reins, sometimes in the school and sometimes in the open. She was one of the few ponies with which I was not able to follow my usual course of breaking, because I never could make out at what stage she stuck. However, as she was sound, thoroughbred, and very good-looking, someone took a fancy to her and bought her at auction, but she gave him two falls through turning while galloping disunited. I do not know what became of her, but she would probably sell very well again because of her looks.

'C——'

A bay gelding, bred by myself, 15.1. We put him into breaking tackle at three years old and played him at four. He had a fortnight in the long reins, during which he was backed. He was hacked all winter and the following summer he played polo. I entrusted the early stick and ball lessons to a groom, who had been very successful with the preliminary handling. I have no idea what happened during this early stick work, or whether anything happened at all, but he never, all the years he played polo, ceased to regard the ball with suspicion. I could play him, but I could never give a show with stick and ball outside the game. He was a very perfectly shaped pony and all his school work came to him easily. A fortnight sufficed, and another fortnight at fast work made him completely handy. He was probably the fastest pony I ever owned, but in his second season I foolishly lent him for a match and he got the bars of his mouth cut. I rested him for six months, but he was never quite the same pony after. I played him several seasons, but he was only true on the ball at full speed.

'D——'

The mother of the above, 14.3, twenty-seven years old when she gave up polo. She was too old for remounts to buy at the beginning of the war, which she spent in idleness and in having C——, her only foal. How long she would have taken to break, with my present experience, I do not know, but it took me two years before I got her into the game. She was a small pony, according to present ideas, staunch enough unless she came up against a big opponent, in which case she refused to engage in a riding-off bout. However, she was so fast and handy that this was not disturbing. She was the worst possible hack, because she would not pass any cottage where there was washing hanging out, and, further, she used to have a good look at every cottage she approached to see if there was any washing. She always played better at home than away, as unfamiliar surroundings seemed to take her attention. She was a French thoroughbred and I got her at seven years old. She had a tendency to star-gaze. She went through my usual course, but it is difficult to say how long I spent at each stage, because she always had to be put back and re-taught some early exercise. Her tendency to star-gaze gave me the most trouble. It took her months to get used to the white ball, and if I could have sold her as a hack I should have done so, but motor traffic was new, and horses were wanted that were quiet on the road and she was certainly not. However, my perseverance was rewarded, as eventually she played two or three chukkers three times a week and never missed a game through unsoundness, and she lived eight miles from the ground. Her legs were perfectly clean to the end. Her rest during the war no doubt prolonged her working life, and her maternal experience calmed her down considerably.

'M——'

A brown mare, a weight-carrying pony, just backed and no more, eventually the winner of many prizes in the show ring. Her sides were too sensitive to leg pressure, and she was very difficult to break in consequence, and even difficult to ride without her switching her tail, even if one sat as loosely as possible. The man I bought her from had broken her for Dublin Show in a fortnight, and, with a view to saving time and with the idea of getting her to answer to the leg quickly, he used very sharp spurs, which, I think, accounted for her over-sensitiveness. To anyone accustomed

to using his legs and heels she was a difficult animal to ride, but to anyone who can manage without leg pressure, she put up a better show. I sold her before her education was finished, but she promised well.

‘M——’

A bay mare, 16 hands, six years, broken to ride. This was a typical case of mismanagement; although her schooling seemed to proceed on quite normal lines. She carried herself perfectly, was balanced and took to jumping without any trouble, but she was apt to become unmanageable at the end of a lesson. I was anxious to give her a rest and start afresh, and if I could have got a ride out of her without a battle I should have done so. Even on the road she was nappy and would try to turn up every lane towards home. A friend to whom I described her asked me to lend her for the winter because she felt sure she could cure her. The following spring she wrote to me that she had a good offer for her from a master of hounds, which I accepted. I was curious to know how she had effected a cure, and it proved to be nothing more complicated than a complete rest, during which her mouth regained its freshness and an insignificant sore on her side got well.

‘M—— D——’

A thoroughbred chestnut mare, 16.1, five years. Through lack of extreme speed she had had an unsuccessful racing career. As she was a very placid animal, indeed almost lethargic, she was not easy to school, and propulsion had to come from the rider's legs. In her fast paces she lowered her head and stretched out her neck, taking a tremendous hold of the bit. Out hunting she galloped along with her eyes glued on hounds, and because of the difficulty of raising her head and obtaining the direct flexion, it was often impossible to prevent her charging her fences. We had some narrow escapes of falling, but one day we took a toss through failing to clear an open ditch, and parted company. She got loose and galloped after hounds. I saw her make for a gateway across which was a single strand of barbed wire, four feet high. She saw that all right and jumped it. But the next fence had *hidden* wire in the hedge and she got hung up on it. Very sensibly she lay rock still till we cut the wire and disentangled her. She never became a safe hunter; her early training seemed to have been too deeply ingrained, and, I think, had altered her make and shape till it had become a physical impossibility for her to gallop with her head in a controllable position.

APPENDIX II

FULL SYLLABUS OF THE COURSE
AT THE
EQUITATION SCHOOL, WEEDON, NORTHANTS.

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EQUITATION SCHOOL
SYLLABUS OF WORK ON TRAINED HORSES

PART I.

July 13th to Dec. 13th.

Note.—Part I is founded on the syllabus for recruits on pages 81 and 82, *Manual of Equitation, Horsemastership and Driving*, 1929, but as students have already ridden a good deal before they come to the school, the elementary work at the beginning is compressed into a shorter period and the whole of Part I has fewer lessons allotted to it than is the case in the *Manual*.

1st Fortnight. 13/7/31 to 26/7/31.

Concentrate on position, suppleness and strength of seat. Balance and activity exercises at halt and walk. Trotting and cantering lessons. At least 10 minutes daily without stirrups. Jumping lessons, 1st stage and plenty of jumping without reins and without stirrups over fences in school or baby lane. All riding in snaffles and troop saddles. Instructional work in the following: Sections 26, 36 and 44 (Appendix I, XV).

2nd Fortnight. 27/7/31 to 9/8/31.

As for 1st Fortnight. Increase time without stirrups. Jumping slightly bigger fences. Balance exercises at walk and trot. Begin to introduce and discuss simple aids. Walk, trot, canter and halt and turns and circles on the move, but only for short periods—mostly loose rein work. Instructional work as above continued.

3rd Fortnight. 10/8/31 to 23/8/31.

Put bits on. Keep on troop saddles. Continue as above. Balance exercises at walk, trot and canter. Short periods on blankets. More simple aids. Changing pace and direction. Latter to be done with both direct and indirect rein. All jumping still without reins. Instructional work as above continued and Sections 37, 38, 39 and parts of Section 40.

4th and 5th Fortnights. 24/8/31 to 20/9/31.

More loose rein work and balance exercises. Start riding in plain saddles to confirm position and decide definitely on correct length of stirrup. Start teaching more complicated aids. Start reining back, bending lesson and collection. Instructional work as above continued and the rest of Section 40. Start 2nd jumping in 5th Fortnight.

STANDARD TO BE ATTAINED AT THE END
OF THE FIFTH FORTNIGHT

Seat should be confirmed and the student should be able to carry out increase and decrease of pace correctly and do the turns. The student should be good enough at instructional work to start taking recruits on dummy horse and in early lessons in trotting and cantering.

6th Fortnight. 21/9/31 to 4/10/31.

By now seat should be more or less confirmed. Start more active riding. Further in-

struction in use of hand and leg in more complicated aids. Continue no stirrup work, and jumping without reins. Instructional work as above and Sections 39, 40, 41 and 42.

7th Fortnight. 5/10/31 to 18/10/31.

Start jumping with reins. Continue lateral aids and more collection. Bending lesson at a trot. Instructional work in Sections 39, 40-42 and 44 (Appendix I, XVI) and practice in taking a class of recruits in movements round a horse, mounting and dismounting etc. on dummy horse, and in 1st lesson to recruits, trotting lesson and cantering lesson.

8th Fortnight. 19/10/31 to 1/11/31.

More collected work, and continue bending lesson at a trot. Striking off into a canter on a named leg from a walk on a straight line. Plenty of jumping with reins. Instructional work continued in Sections 39, 40, 41, 42 and 44. Practice in taking a class of recruits continued as in 7th Fortnight, with addition of jumping lesson, 1st stage.

9th Fortnight. 2/11/31 to 15/11/31.

Striking off into a canter from a walk on a straight line, on a named leg, and bending lesson at a canter. Jumping with reins continued. Riding with reins in one hand. *Start sword work mounted.* Instructional work continued in Sections 39, 42 and 44. Practice in taking class of recruits in jumping lesson, 1st stage, and in Sections 27, 38, 39 and parts of Section 40. Parade on regimental saddles with swords and start sword syllabus.

10th Fortnight. 16/11/31 to 29/11/31.

Continue as in 9th Fortnight, and start changing at a canter. More riding with reins in one hand. *Plenty of sword work.* Repetition in instructional work. Practice in taking class of recruits in further lessons, and continuing Section 44.

11th Fortnight. 30/12/31 to 13/12/31.

Bending lessons at canter, changing at a canter and repetition of previous work. Repetition in instructional work. Practice with class of recruits in jumping lesson, 2nd stage and riding with reins.

Note.—Instructional work is to run contemporarily with each lesson given throughout this period.

STANDARD TO BE ATTAINED AT THE END OF THE 11TH FORTNIGHT

The student should be a good strong horseman, capable of carrying out all the school work up to and including the passage at a

canter and changing at a canter, provided he is riding an averagely well-trained horse, and he should be able to get a sticky horse across country. He should also be able to take a class of recruits on the dummy horse, and should be able to give all the lessons.

PART II.

January 18th to April 3rd.

This period of the course will be used for repetition and finishing work in riding, for instructional work and skill at arms.

12th Fortnight. 18/1/32 to 31/1/32.

Repetition work without stirrups and concentration on seat. Mounted work with weapons. Instructional work. Taking class of recruits in Sections 39, 40, 41 and 42.

13th Fortnight. 1/2/32 to 14/2/32.

Polishing school work with particular attention to passage at canter and change at canter. Instructional work. Taking class of recruits in Sections 39, 40, 41, 42 and 44 (Appendix I, XVI).

14th, 15th and 16th Fortnights. 15/2/32 to 18/3/32.

Continue as above, paying special attention to instructional work and instruction in the organisation of equitation in a unit. Vaulting displays, activity rides, sports, etc. Instructional work will be continued up to and including the taking of the recruits' rides in Sections 47 and 48.

STANDARD TO BE ATTAINED AT THE END OF PART II

Besides being an efficient horseman, the student should be capable of taking and instructing a ride of recruits in all the lessons, should know how to organise equitation and mounted sports in a unit and how to design jumps and jumping lanes, and should be proficient in weapon training.

PART III.

17th Fortnight. 28/3/32 to 10/4/32.

Revision of instructional work. Making out programme of a course of equitation in units to suit various conditions and to fit in with training programme in other work.

18th Fortnight. 11/4/32 to 24/4/32.

Practice for sports. Repetition and polishing up in instructional work. Jumping lesson, 3rd stage, for officers and selected N.C.O.'s.

Final Fortnight. 25/4/32 to 7/5/32.

Sports and Examinations.

EQUITATION SCHOOL

SYLLABUS OF WORK ON REMOUNTS AND HALF-TRAINED HORSES

(See *Manual of Horsemastership, Equitation and Driving*, Sections 49 to 54 and 66 to 77.)

Section 49 gives a syllabus for the training of a remount which it lays down is to be taken as a rough guide.

The School syllabus of work on the remount and of work on the half-trained horse is based on this, but differs from it in one particular:

The amount of time spent at the School in putting the remount through its whole course of training is about 64 weeks, compared with 51 weeks laid down in the syllabus in the *Manual*. There are three reasons why this extra thirteen weeks is found very useful here:

(a) The period of 51 weeks is suggested in the *Manual* on the assumption that the training will be continuous. This should be possible in a cavalry regiment, but cannot be done at this School, where there are two breaks in the training; one of five weeks at Christmas and one of two months from the middle of May to the middle of July, between one course and the next. The result of these breaks is that a certain amount of work has been forgotten and has to be repeated when training is resumed before further progress can be made.

(b) The time table in the *Manual* is based on the assumption that the trainer knows his job before he starts work on his remount. But here the student is learning to be a trainer and training his young horse at the same time, so progress has necessarily to be slower for the first five months, if the horse is not to be spoilt by the trainer's inexperience.

(c) In the second half of the remount's training period, i.e. the period which he begins at the School as a 'half-trained' horse, it is assumed in the *Manual* that the man is a good active rider. But in the School syllabus of work on the trained horse it will be noticed that active riding is only elementary in the first two months of the course. So until the

student is in his third month and is becoming a good active rider, the training of the half-trained horse has to be retarded to suit his horsemanship.

The condition, state of training and maturity of remounts on joining the School or a regiment varies considerably, and there is no doubt that in many individual cases the training period of 51 weeks recommended in the *Manual* could be shortened. But the system must be learnt thoroughly and no horse is spoilt by being taken too slow, though the reverse is often the case: so at the School each remount is treated as the genuine raw article, and the syllabus in the *Manual* is fully carried out with the modification mentioned above.

SYLLABUS OF WORK ON REMOUNTS

1st Fortnight.

Reading (1st stage in Long Rein Driving film). Handling and accustoming him to strange sights and sounds. Lead over very small obstacles on the way home. Commence training on long reins (2nd stage in film). Start teaching obedience to voice.

2nd Fortnight.

Continue long rein work. Saddling and beginning of next stage (3rd stage in film). Trotting. Start leading over very small obstacles.

3rd Fortnight.

Start putting snaffle in horse's mouth, in stables, for 10 minutes at a time, and feeding with it on. Continue with long rein work (4th stage in film). Trotting and changing. Start free jumping in manèges or baby lane.

4th Fortnight.

Continue long rein work (5th stage in film). Some work at canter, reining back and lateral movement work in open. Free jumping in baby lane.

5th Fortnight.

Continue long rein work as above. Free jumping in baby lane. Put snaffle in for longer periods, work with them in, but not attached to the reins.

STANDARD OF TRAINING AT THE END OF TENTH WEEK WHEN HORSE IS READY TO BE BACKED

He should be obedient and free, especially obedient to the voice; have confidence in his trainer, and be quiet to handle; should be accustomed to carry the saddle; should understand the indications of the rein to the mouth and its pressure round the quarters; should canter kindly on a small circle; rein back, do lateral movements in response to the aids used in long rein driving, halt from a canter and canter from a halt, and should go down the baby lane. He should also have come on in condition and begin to show some muscle.

6th Fortnight.

Mounting and dismounting. Free forward movement. Work at a walk and trot on straight lines in a ride in the open. Road work. More free jumping.

7th Fortnight.

More free forward movement. Increase and decrease of pace and obedience to voice. Start short canters on straight lines together in the open, allowing horse to strike off on whichever leg he pleases. Start trying to get head carriage and balance. More free jumping.

8th Fortnight.

Start large turns and circles in manège and open at a walk and trot. More free jumping. Continue cantering on straight lines in open.

9th Fortnight.

Continue turns and circles at walk, trot and cantering on straight lines and large circles. More free jumping. Start indirect rein.

10th Fortnight.

Continue as in 9th Fortnight. Start bending lesson dismounted.

11th Fortnight.

Continue as for 10th Fortnight.

CHRISTMAS BREAK OF FIVE WEEKS

12th Fortnight.

Revision of work done in the eleven weeks preceding the break.

13th Fortnight.

Smaller circles at a walk, trot and canter, and turns at a walk and trot. Start riding with one hand on the reins. More free jump-

ing. Continue dismounted bending lesson and start bending lesson mounted, at a walk.

14th Fortnight.

Continue bending lesson mounted and start reining back. Continue work with one hand on the reins. More free jumping. Start getting accustomed to drill, rifle fire and dummies.

15th Fortnight.

Continue bending lesson and reining back. Cantering on a named leg from a trot.

16th Fortnight.

Continue bending lesson, reining back and cantering on a named leg from a trot. Start turning on haunches. Start mounted jumping in baby lane at a trot, using neck-straps.

17th Fortnight.

Continue as in previous fortnight. Mounted jumping in baby lane at a trot, and over ditches and small fences in school and outside without wings.

18th Fortnight.

Continue as above.

STANDARD OF TRAINING OF REMOUNTS AT THE END OF THE COURSE

The horse should have good manners, should go well up to his bit on a snaffle; should increase and decrease pace smoothly and quietly at a walk, trot and canter on straight lines and halt collectedly. He should in the bending lesson on a named leg turn and circle at a trot and canter in obedience to the indirect rein when ridden with one hand only on the reins. He should go well, jumping freely down all the lanes, and jumping mounted, should jump small fences up to 3 feet high, without wings, from a trot, and small open ditches from a halt, walk or trot. He should be in good condition and well muscled up; his neck and wither muscles should be developed, and his head carriage should be confirmed in the best position his conformation will allow.

Note.—After the two months summer break the remount resumes work as a half-trained horse.

SYLLABUS OF WORK ON HALF-TRAINED HORSES

Seven Fortnights.

Revision of work done by the horse in the 6th to 17th Fortnights inclusive of his work as a remount. All work in a snaffle. Start mounted jumping (in lanes only) at beginning of 5th Fortnight. Start sitting in double bridle during the 4th to 7th Fortnights.

8th Fortnight.

Start bending lesson at a trot. Start canter on a named leg from a walk. Mounted jumping at a trot with reins in lanes, using martingale straps. Start doing a little work at extended paces for very short distances, 200 yards or so.

9th Fortnight.

Continue as in 8th Fortnight—mounted jumping with or without reins at discretion of instructor. Continue bending lesson at trot. Start biting on double bridle, dismounted only, for short periods at end of lessons. Start getting horses accustomed to dummies.

10th Fortnight.

Continue as above and start bending lesson at a canter, jumping small fences mounted at a trot. Start biting on double bridle, mounted.

11th Fortnight.

Continue bending lesson at a canter and jumping small fences at a canter. Start changing at a canter. Start cantering round dummy courses.

STANDARD OF TRAINING OF HALF-TRAINED HORSES BEFORE CHRISTMAS BREAK

In addition to having been polished up in his training up to the standard laid down for remounts at the end of the course, he should do the bending lesson well at a walk, trot and canter; should strike off correctly on a named leg at a canter from a walk, and should increase and decrease pace smoothly and quietly between a 9 miles an hour canter and a 15 miles an hour gallop and should change at a canter in a figure of eight.

12th Fortnight.

Revision of work done in the 6th to 11th Fortnights. Regimental saddles and swords.

13th Fortnight.

Revision of work as above. Mounted jumping at a canter, gradually increasing size of fences. Regimental saddles, swords and rifles.

14th Fortnight.

Start revision of all school work on double bridle. Further mounted jumping.

15th Fortnight.

Continue work on double bridle. Further mounted jumping, if possible once a week, over natural fences that horses have never seen before.

16th Fortnight.

Special attention to collected work at a canter, school exercises, double bridle, etc., with only one hand on the reins. Jumping continued as above.

17th and 18th Fortnights.

As for 16th Fortnight.

FINAL STANDARD

The horse should have good manners and a good mouth. He should be well balanced, well muscled up and in good condition, handy and quick in obeying the correct aids, steady both in and out of the ranks and capable of being ridden with one hand at any pace, alone or in company. He should be a good jumper and able to gallop. In school work he should be perfect in passaging, at a walk, trot and canter; should turn on his haunches, do a short figure of eight smoothly and collectedly, and should be quiet and handy to ride round the dummy course, and accustomed to sword and rifle and noises of revolver and rifle fire.

One realises from the foregoing what opportunities the Weedon equitation course offers to the cavalry man and how far beyond the reach of the civilian is expert horsemanship without the wide experience that can only come with mature years.

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